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CONTROVERSY IN AESTHETICS: IMPLICATIONS FOR  
METACRITICISM IN ART EDUCATION

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# **The following images and appendices have been omitted on request of the University –**

**Fig. 1                      pg. 224**

**Fig. 2                      pg. 227**

**Fig. 4                      pg. 233**

**Fig. 5                      pg. 235**

**Fig. 6                      pg. 238**

**Fig. 7                      pg. 240**

**Fig. 8                      pg. 241**

**Fig. 9                      pg. 245**

**Fig. 10                    pg. 248**

**Appendix IV**

**Appendix V**

**Appendix VI**

## ABSTRACT

M D RAWDING 1991

### CONTROVERSY IN AESTHETICS : IMPLICATIONS FOR METACRITICISM IN ART EDUCATION

Aesthetic controversy over the link between art and criticism is investigated with a view to exploring implications for metacriticism in art education. Artistic intention is defined as a principal controversy on the assumption that it is representative of disputes in aesthetics as a whole concerning the relative validity of divergent critical stances. A disparity is found to exist between the centrality of aesthetic controversy as a focus of metacriticism among aestheticians and its peripheral status in art education theorizing. On the (discipline-based) assumption that art teaching and learning should be grounded in the content and methods of artists, art historians, art critics, and aestheticians, this disparity is considered a research 'problem'. It is hypothesized that controversy in aesthetics is a potential source of curriculum development in art education.

Relevant 'kinds' of theory are analyzed with a view to clarifying issues underlying aesthetic controversy, such as that prompted by intention. An analysis is made of standard oppositions in philosophy and aesthetics with particular reference to the divide between analytical and Continental philosophical traditions. Underlying theoretical frameworks are identified and speculations made about the kinds of critical strategies that might arise from them. In this connection, teaching about intention in the field of literature education theory is explored in some detail with the aim of discovering strategies for metacriticism that might be applied to art teaching. Moreover, the research addresses the problem of translating discipline-based content in respect of controversy into a pedagogy of metacriticism. Following an examination of pedagogical models in general education theory, it is concluded that fundamental controversy (in aesthetics) implies a paradoxical, though not illogical, alignment of 'commitment' and 'impartiality' in respect of subject content and wider educational goals.

A synthesis is finally made of arguments arising from the analyses of separate kinds of theory and this culminates in a formulation of principles for teaching metacriticism. This is based on key aspects of aesthetic theory which, in combination, reflect not only the diversity but the contestability of art criticism, namely, the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic evidence, descriptive and interpretive statements, moral and aesthetic judgments, and between intentionalism and anti-intentionalism. Discussion of the metacritical principles is illustrated by reference to relevant classes of artworks. Moreover, the implications of teaching aesthetics and criticism as an interactive whole are discussed in respect of curriculum development and teacher training at both national and institutional levels. The study concludes with a reflective criticism of the research method and suggestions are made about possibilities for future research.

## AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

1. During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared, the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification.
2. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.
3. The programme of advanced study of which this thesis is part has consisted of:
  - 3.1 Participation in research colloquia, seminars, and supervision tutorials held at the Centre for Postgraduate Teacher Education, Leicester Polytechnic.
  - 3.2 Participation in and attendance at relevant research conferences.

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## CHAPTER 1

## AESTHETIC CONTROVERSY: A FOCUS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN ART EDUCATION?

1.1	Definition of Problem Area .....	1
1.2	Investigation of Separate Kinds of Theory .....	4
1.3	Organization of Research Writing .....	9
1.4	Levels of Application .....	11

## CHAPTER 2

## ISSUES AND CONCERNS RELATING TO A RESEARCH METHOD

2.1	Introduction .....	13
2.2	'Analytical' and 'Synthetic' Orientations in the Philosophy of Education .....	15
2.3	The Relationship of Aesthetic and Educational Theory .....	16
2.4	Three Categories of Research in the Philosophy of Education .....	17
2.4.1	Curricular Research .....	18
2.4.2	Conceptual Research .....	18
2.4.3	Critical Review .....	19
2.4.4	Reflection on the Categories .....	20
2.5	'Paradigms' in the Philosophy of Education .....	21
2.6	Paradigms of Art Education Research: Their Relevance for Enquiry into Theoretical Issues.....	22
2.6.1	Empirical/Analytic .....	23
2.6.2	Interpretive/Hermeneutic .....	25
2.6.3	Critical/Theoretic .....	29
2.6.4	Reflection on the Paradigms .....	31

2.7	Metacriticism and Methodology .....	32
2.8	Dialectical Procedure .....	39
2.9	Summary .....	41

### CHAPTER 3

#### METHODS OF CRITICISM AND METACRITICISM IN ART EDUCATION

3.1	Introduction .....	44
3.2	'Art Historian' and 'Art Critic' as Role Models: Distinctions and Interrelations.....	46
3.3	Teaching a Range of Approaches to the History and Criticism of Art.....	52
3.4	'Aesthetician' as Role Model: Alternative Critical Stances..	56
3.4.1	Components of Critical Activity: A Comparison of Models.....	57
3.4.2	Argumentative Aesthetic Criticism in Action .....	63
3.4.3	The Relevance for Art Education of Aestheticians' Views on Criticism.....	69
3.5	Metacriticism in Discipline-Based Art Education.....	74
3.6	Summary .....	79

### CHAPTER 4

#### STANDARD OPPOSITIONS OF PHILOSOPHY AND AESTHETICS

4.1	Introduction.....	82
4.2	Research Sources and Criteria for Choosing Them.....	83
4.3	The Intrinsic/Extrinsic Distinction in Aesthetics with Reference to Meta-philosophical Controversy.....	85
4.3.1	Analytical and Continental: Opposing Traditions?....	86
4.4	Distinctions between Theoretical Frameworks with Reference to Conceptual Characteristics.....	91
4.4.1	Empiricism in Aesthetics and the Problem of Reduction	92

4.4.2	Social Origin and Justification of Knowledge Claims and the Problem of Relativism.....	96
4.4.3	The 'Incommensurability Thesis' and the Problem of Communication between Frameworks.....	100
4.5	Summary.....	106

## CHAPTER 5

### ISSUES IN AESTHETIC CONTROVERSY

5.1	Introduction .....	110
5.2	The Concept 'Artwork' and the Problem of Definition .....	115
5.3	The Description/Interpretation Dichotomy .....	123
5.4	The Acceptance of Divergent Interpretations of Given Artworks.....	127
5.5	The Aesthetic Relevance of Ideological Factors Affecting the Production and Criticism of Artworks.....	133
5.6	Summary.....	138

## CHAPTER 6

### INTENTION IN AESTHETICS AND LITERATURE EDUCATION

6.1	Introduction .....	141
6.2	Aesthetic Theory and Educational Theory.....	144
6.2.1	Controversy in Aesthetics and the Relevance of Literature Education Theory.....	145
6.2.2	Controversy in Aesthetics and the Relevance of Perceptual Theory.....	147
6.2.3	The Intrinsic/Extrinsic Polarity: Pedagogical Implications.....	149
6.3	Controversy over Intention in Aesthetics.....	153
6.4	Controversy over Intention and Teaching Literature.....	162
6.5	Summary .....	171

## CHAPTER 7

### TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSY IN GENERAL EDUCATION THEORY

7.1	Introduction .....	173
7.2	Distinction between Subject-based and Community-based Controversy .....	175
7.3	The 'Subject' and 'Pedagogical' Perspectives of Teachers ..	180
7.4	Teaching about Fundamental Controversies .....	188
7.5	Pedagogical Role Models .....	192
7.6	Summary .....	203

## CHAPTER 8

### PRINCIPLES OF METACRITICISM IN ART EDUCATION

8.1	Introduction .....	206
8.2	Review of Research Outcomes .....	207
8.3	Metacritical Principles .....	220
8.4	Curricular Implications .....	222
8.5	Summary .....	255

## CHAPTER 9

### IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH IN THE UK

9.1	Introduction .....	257
9.2	Reflective Criticism of the Research Method .....	257
9.3	Metacriticism : Key Conclusions .....	265
9.4	Possibilities for Future Research .....	269
9.5	Summary .....	272

NOTES .....	273
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BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	283
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APPENDICES .....	1-21
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## CHAPTER 1

### AESTHETIC CONTROVERSY : A FOCUS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN ART EDUCATION?

#### 1.1. Definition of Problem Area

The aim of the enquiry is to examine the nature of controversy in aesthetics with a view to exploring its implications for metacriticism in art education. In so doing, the controversy over artistic intention will provide a focus of investigation, reasons for which are given below. The key term 'metacriticism' refers to the activity of theorizing about the relationship of art and criticism as in writings on philosophical aesthetics. It is subsequently examined in some detail (see Chap. 2.7).

The research is discipline-based. It accepts the premise of, for example, Allison's (1982) 'Four Domains Model' and the protocols of the Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) movement in the U.S.A. (e.g., Hamblen, 1987), which is that art teaching and learning should be modelled on the content and methods of professional artists, art historians, and in particular, as far as this research is concerned, art critics and aestheticians. The research is methodological also in the sense that it constitutes an exploration of the relationship between theories and methods of criticism in respect of both aesthetic and instructional theory. Indeed, an attempt is made to co-ordinate aspects of these two kinds of theory with a view to this informing existing principles and procedures for teaching metacriticism.

The term 'kinds of theory' is significant, for though the research is described as discipline-based, it is not suggested that aesthetics, for example, is a distinct discipline; on the contrary, it is multi- or inter-disciplinary, and involves the investigation of matters germane to (branches of) philosophy, sociology, psychology and other humanistic disciplines (Diffey, 1984, p.169). Moreover, it is recognized that a range of divergent stances exists within each of these contributing disciplines: philosophical aesthetics, for example, includes a diversity of viewpoints both within Anglo-American analytical philosophy and Continental, or Continentally-inspired, traditions such as phenomenology and hermeneutics (Belsey, 1980; Eagleton, 1983). Instructional theory in art education also encompasses a range of traditions (Efland, 1979).

The research topic developed from a previous study of irony in the visual arts (Rawding, 1984, Appendix I). A major finding of that study was that the concept of artistic intention, which was identified as central to the interpretation of irony, had received scant treatment in art education theory in the U.K. This paucity of treatment was found to be in marked contrast to the importance which aestheticians attached to the concept: for example, the philosopher Hospers (1975, p.42) claimed that it had '... prompted the principal controversy in the mid 20th century' in the field of aesthetics (emphasis added). This disparity between art education theory and aesthetic theory was thought to pose a problem or 'felt difficulty' (Van Dalen, 1979, p.12f) which it was the purpose of the present study to investigate. The potential inter-connectedness of these two kinds of theory is highlighted by the term 'principal controversy.' First,

if artistic intention is of 'principal' concern to aestheticians, then assuming a discipline-based view of art education, its importance ought to be reflected in art education theory concerning the content and methods of teaching metacriticism. Second, if artistic intention is a focus for 'controversy', then its status as such suggests that it is symptomatic, even representative or paradigmatic, of that which both aestheticians and art education theorists have described as the controversial character of aesthetic criticism as a whole, (Erickson, 1979; Geahigan, 1983).

The underlying assumption of this research is that the study of controversy in philosophical aesthetics is synonymous with the task of the metacritic: it involves trying to make sense of 'diverse schools of criticism' by examining the 'pluralism of viewpoints' which underlie them, especially in regard to the nature of art and methods of critical interpretation and evaluation (Margolis, 1975, pp 88-89). Such divergence is representative of broadly based philosophical disputes involving questions of ontology and epistemology, namely, questions about the nature or being of cultural entities, the formation and validation of knowledge, and the relationship between theoretical constructs and social action. Second-order questioning of this kind has been identified as an essential part of advanced study in most, if not all, areas of knowledge (Schwab, 1964; Dearden, 1981). Hence, the controversy over artistic intention is understood to be representative, not only of the problematic character of aesthetics and criticism, but also of the problematic character of knowledge per se.



In brief, the 'problem' or 'situation' which prompted the present research study can be stated as follows:

Controversy over the link between art and criticism, as exemplified by the issue of intention, is a key focus for metacritical enquiry in the field of aesthetics; hence, on the assumption that art teaching should be discipline-based, such controversy ought to function as a focus for teaching metacriticism in art education.

However, controversy in aesthetics has received scant treatment in art education theory. Hence, the aim of the research is to explore the pedagogical potential of this aspect of content.

## 1.2 Investigation of Separate Kinds of Theory

A major concern of this study is to that of communicating between philosophical and pedagogical levels of understanding. In this connection, the transfer of knowledge-content from the realm of discipline-based scholarship and research to the realm of education is considered to be problematic because of the inevitable tension between the principles of 'complexity' and 'parsimony' which invariably accompanies such transference (Smith & Smith, 1981, p.5). In particular, aesthetic theory relating to art criticism is fundamentally difficult to grasp intellectually and does not readily translate into content and methods for teaching (Geahigan, 1983; Lankford, 1984). As Lankford has noted, philosophical writings on criticism tend to be produced in an academic context that is remote from the demands of schooling; hence, such theorizings '... fail to provide any correlative method for teachers or students of criticism to use' (p.151) and could, therefore, present a daunting prospect, especially for the hard-pressed teacher or lecturer who, after all, is '... under no professional obligation to join aestheticians in the frontlines of (a) philosophical debate' (Smith & Smith, op cit., p.7).

A need exists then for the provision of theoretical materials that are both conceptually sound and could '... offer clues to a workable teaching method' (ibid.).

In recognition of this need for what Feldman (1981, p.146) has described as a descent from '... the stratosphere of theory to the terrestrial realm of teaching', this researcher suggests that such a task is best fulfilled by individuals who fit Stenhouse's (1981, pp.109-111) designation of 'Teacher-Researcher': namely, those whose approach to theory is conducted either in the context of their own classrooms, or at least with the demands and opportunities of practical teaching in mind. This researcher is employed as a teacher of art in a secondary school and is, concurrently, registered as a part-time research student. As such, he is strategically placed to engage in the 'systematic self-critical enquiry' expected of researchers whilst remaining alert to the need for theoretical materials to be made pedagogically relevant (ibid., cf. Wilson, 1984, p.6; Meeson, 1977, p.4; Eisner, 1984, p.261 f.). The notion of 'Extended Professional'<sup>1</sup> (Open Univ., 1972, pp.24-25) is also relevant to his role, because it designates an individual whose concern is to 'intellectualize the task of teaching' through adopting innovations in theory and practice from outside the school as a basis for personal curriculum research and development. The object then is to achieve a private 'clarification' of theoretical issues which impinge on the problem identified in 1.1. above, with a view to producing a public 'communication' of those issues in the shape of pedagogical proposals for the field of art education.

The concern to 'bridge the gap' between different kinds of theory (aesthetic, instructional) and different models of professional involvement (aestheticians, art educators) is reflected in the research approach (Chap. 2). Given the need for this researcher to develop his personal understanding of theory as a pre-requisite of communicating outcomes, the research approach is defined as 'emergent' as opposed to 'preordinate', because this is thought to offer the most appropriate means of allowing a gradual unfolding of personal knowledge to take place accompanied by a constant reflection on its likely pedagogical application. Also, it allows the research 'problem' to be brought gradually into focus whilst under investigation. This thesis is not, therefore, a retrospective writing up of research findings; rather it is a piece of exploratory writing in which the arrangement of chapters is largely representative of developing stages of research over a seven year period beginning in September 1984. Viewed collectively, the chapters could be said to comprise a series of discrete 'essays' in which different kinds of theory are investigated through a process of writing and re-writing, involving exploration, reflection and continual refinement of the research 'problem'. In brief, the writing of the thesis is the research.

This exploratory, emergent character of the writing is conveyed by a difficulty experienced in the application of verb tenses. The bulk of the writing either comments on the ideas of different authors or quotes them directly. In this case, the past or perfect tenses are used. At key points, however, a consequence of comparing insights and

reflecting on implications is the emergence of 'live' issues, and where this occurs the writing is in the present tense.

Given that an initial decision had been taken at the start of the research that the focus should be theoretical, it was thought necessary to analyze textual material relating to art education, philosophy, aesthetics and literature education. The aim was to clarify methodological principles bearing on the teaching of criticism and metacriticism, both in respect of the controversy over intention and wider aesthetic controversy. First, an analytical review of art education theory was conducted to ascertain the then current state of knowledge about the teaching of criticism and metacriticism. Second, an analysis was made of the standard oppositions of philosophy that underlie aesthetic controversy. Third, aesthetic theory was analyzed with a view to identifying conceptual issues associated with the relationship of art and criticism, and making tentative speculations about practice. Fourth, in the light of arguments arising from the previous essays, an analysis was also made of literature education theory concerning the pedagogical implications of controversy in literary criticism with particular reference to intention. This analysis proceeded on the assumption that because the seminal work on the controversy over intention (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1954) was written primarily with reference to literature, it was highly probable that pedagogical principles relating to this controversy would be enshrined in the teaching of literary criticism. In the event, literature education theory proved to be less helpful than expected and another kind of theory, namely, general education theory

concerning the teaching of controversial issues was also analyzed and found to be more productive.

The operative word which best describes the research approach to these different kinds of theory is 'analysis'. However, it is to be understood not in the usual sense of conceptual analysis, with the objectivity that may connote, but in a qualified sense more akin to 'investigation', or even 'exploration'. Researching the five kinds of theory can be briefly summarised as follows:

An analysis of .....

art education theory relating to the teaching of a range of critical methods, i.e., metacriticism;

philosophical theory bearing on conceptual issues underlying controversy between divergent intellectual traditions;

aesthetic theory bearing on controversy over the link between ontology of art and concomitant methods of criticism;

literature education theory regarding the pedagogical implications of controversy in literary criticism with particular reference to intention;

'general' education theory regarding the teaching of controversial issues across the curriculum.

The arguments which emerge from these analyses are 'synthesized' in the penultimate chapter to form a statement of principles for teaching metacriticism in art education. The process of synthesizing is anticipated in earlier chapters, particularly in the summaries where the significance of issues emerging from each analysis is reflected upon. The relationship between different kinds of theory and the research approach used to investigate this remained problematic throughout the research and, like the content of the study as a whole,

was clarified only gradually. The issues bearing on the development of a research approach are examined in detail (Chap. 2).

### 1.3 Organization of Research Writing

Chapter 2 features a discussion of issues surrounding the development of a research approach appropriate to the theory orientation of the enquiry as a whole. It refers to existing paradigms of educational research and involves differentiating empirical/analytic and qualitative/interpretive traditions in order to define and argue for an 'emergent' mode of enquiry.

Chapter 3 begins by querying the extent to which art education theorists, whilst seeming to have 'neglected' aesthetic controversy as a pedagogical focus, might nevertheless have proposed strategies for teaching a range of critical methods. Hence, Chapter 3 is an analytical review of relevant British and North American art education literature; it aims to locate texts which offer not merely stipulations for practice but reasons for grounding practice in both aesthetic and instructional theory.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of the standard oppositions of philosophy and aesthetics, in particular, the divide between analytical and Continental traditions as discussed in recent meta-philosophical texts (Margolis, 1980a, Bernstein, 1983, Rorty, 1980). The aim is to identify key ontological and epistemological disputes with reference to underlying theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 5 continues the analysis of standard oppositions but in respect of specific issues in aesthetic controversy over the link between the ontology of art and concomitant methods of criticism (esp. Margolis, op cit.) This includes tentative speculation about possibilities for art teaching.

Chapter 6 is an analysis of literature education theory in which comparisons are made with the theoretical outcomes of the preceding analyses. It rests on a further assumption that theorists working in this field have had important things to say about the pedagogical implications of controversy between different critical modes, both in terms of the controversy over intention and in a more general sense. Indeed, the opinions of certain art education theorists support this assumption (Feldman, 1973; Onions, 1979; Reid, 1980; Dyson, 1981). More especially, it is thought necessary to examine this kind of theory because the controversy over intention is distinctly, though not exclusively, literary in origin (Wimsatt & Beardsley, op cit.; Newton De Molina, 1976; cf. Davies, 1982).

Chapter 7 examines the growing body of curriculum theorizing about 'controversiality' (Dearden, 1981) and its pedagogical implications (Stenhouse, 1970; Hulmes, 1979; Stradling, Noctor & Baines, 1984; Kelly, 1986; Wellington, 1986). Its purpose is to compare aesthetic controversy, such as that prompted by intention, with controversy elsewhere in the curriculum in order to gather insights, perspectives, etc. on the teaching of controversial issues which might then be brought to bear on the teaching of metacriticism in art education.

Chapter 8 involves a synthesis of arguments arising from the prior analyses of different kinds of theory. This begins with a review of research outcomes and leads to a formulation of metacritical principles. Subsequently, the implications of the principles for curriculum development are explored with reference to examples of different classes of artworks. In view of the theoretical emphasis of the research, the link between principles and procedures is stated in general terms rather than applied to specific teaching/learning contexts.

Chapter 9 involves a discussion of the implications of findings arising from the study of metacriticism for British art education as a whole. This refers to both curriculum development and research. Suggestions are made concerning future policy at national and institutional levels and indications given about avenues for future research. The chapter includes a reflective criticism of the research method.

#### 1.4 Levels of Application

It is anticipated that the curricular principles (Chap. 8), which are the chief outcomes of the research, will prove relevant to art educators in the U.K. at all levels of education (teachers, student-teachers, teacher-trainers, examiners, advisers, inspectors) who have responsibility for teaching connected with the analytical/critical and historical/cultural domains of art experience (Allison, op. cit.). The curricular implications should be of special interest to art educators operating at advanced secondary and tertiary levels of education who, through their teaching, are seeking to explore the



interrelatedness of aesthetics and criticism. Reference to 'levels' throughout the research indicates that the use of the terms 'teacher,' 'learner,' and 'teaching/learning context' is problematic. It might be argued that the content of philosophical aesthetics may be unsuitable for younger learners; however, as the American art educator Ecker (1973) has shown, it is possible to simplify aesthetic concepts for use with children and adolescents without necessarily succumbing to superficiality. With this in mind, and, conversely, given the range of contexts which might be identified with an 'advanced' level of art education, the use of the above terms will be kept to a minimum. Thus it is recognized that, whilst general statements of principle need to be translated into detailed procedures before they can be considered fully operational, such a degree of specificity is beyond the scope of, and indeed not entirely appropriate to, the theory-oriented concerns of the present research.

## CHAPTER 2

### ISSUES AND CONCERNS RELATING TO A RESEARCH METHOD

#### 2.1 Introduction

The main text of this chapter was written towards the end of the research period and revised at the close. The content arises from a comparative analysis of theoretical texts relating to the philosophy of education and art education research and culminates in a formulation of investigative principles which have been found to be latent in the research as a whole. Since the enquiry which forms its basis was conducted retrospectively, it is largely written in the past tense. It was conducted in the recognition that educational research, in line with social science research as a whole, is customarily grounded in a theoretical understanding of method.

The research as a whole arose from a 'felt difficulty' (Van Dalen, 1979, p.12 f.) concerning the controversy over artistic intention in philosophical aesthetics. Whereas intention was found to be a key focus for debate among aestheticians, it appeared to be a neglected area of content as far as art education was concerned. This discrepancy was said to pose a research problem: namely, that the controversy over intention was a potential source of theory from which to develop a pedagogy of metacriticism and that this would entail both an analysis and synthesis of content drawn from art education theory, aesthetics, literature education theory and general education theory. Moreover, this controversy was believed to be representative of

debates over the link between art and criticism which assumed that questions about art must inevitably imply questions about the nature of reality. This was thought to necessitate a widening of the scope of the research to include the investigation of different interrelated aspects of controversy in aesthetics and in philosophy as a whole. Hence, the research entailed an emphasis on theory as the primary source of data and required the alignment of relevant aspects of aesthetic and education theory leading to implications for pedagogical practice.

The relation of theory to method was central to the subject matter of the enquiry as a whole, since its aim was to explore the implications of particular controversies in aesthetics for the teaching of metacriticism. Likewise, the relation of theory to method was central to its function as educational research. This analysis of educational research theory became a distinctive strand of enquiry, which nevertheless developed in content along lines parallel to the main aims of the enquiry as a whole. In particular, discussion of qualitative research methods proved comparable with conclusions reached concerning the application of hermeneutic theory to methods of criticism.

No ready-made strategy exists in this research literature; hence it proved necessary to combine aspects of research thinking drawn from various sources.<sup>1</sup> This process took place concurrently with the investigation and was both gradual and adaptive to the research outcomes. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to discuss those

aspects of educational research theory which have contributed to the 'selection' and application of a research strategy.

The emphasis on exploring an aspect of aesthetic theory, namely, the controversy over artistic intention, in relation to pedagogy, places the enquiry as a whole more nearly in the category of philosophical, as opposed to sociological, psychological, or historical research. It is not, however, 'philosophical' in the specialist sense of applying principles of philosophical analysis to conceptual problems; rather it is an attempt to clarify a perceived problem area of aesthetic theory with a view to this informing art education theory and practice.

## 2.2 'Analytical' and 'Synthetic' Orientations in the Philosophy of Education

The claim that the enquiry is 'philosophical' in a restricted sense can be supported by appeal to Reid's (1972, p.26) distinction between 'analytical' and 'synthetic' orientations in the philosophy of education. Reid distinguished between, on the one hand, '... the application of philosophical methods to questions of education' and, on the other, '... the relation to education of the relevant results of philosophical thinking'. He pointed out that the 'analytical' approach necessitates a training in general philosophy; whereas the 'synthetic' approach is accessible to educators trained in fields other than philosophy who might wish to make use of the insights generated by philosophers as a spur to their own innovative thinking in respect of curriculum issues. The present enquiry can be classed, more or less, as synthetic philosophy of education in Reid's terms, although to relate the '... relevant results of philosophical thinking' on a contested concept such as artistic intention

necessitates a degree of analysis, especially in view of the anticipated application of research outcomes to the field of art education theory and practice. For if a branch of knowledge is fundamentally controversial, its translation into pedagogical materials must be equally a matter for dispute. 'Synthesis' in this context cannot be conceived of as merely a matter of 'bringing to bear' or 'applying' ready-made knowledge-content, but necessarily involves taking issue with existing analyses. Moreover, synthetic philosophy of education in this sense does not necessarily mean being prescriptive. The impact of educational research overall is characteristically indirect, supplying practitioners with 'insights' (Wilson, 1974), 'working hypotheses' (Bellack, 1978), or 'frames of reference' (Eisner, 1982) rather than teacher-proof materials and ideas.

### 2.3 The Relationship of Aesthetic and Educational Theory

'Synthetic' philosophy of education has been defined above as '... the relation to education of the relevant results of philosophical thinking' (Reid, op. cit., emphasis added). Such 'results' arise in areas of philosophy other than the philosophy of education. Subsequently, by means of synthetic research, these are 'related', or applied, to aspects of educational theory with a view to this improving educational practice. It is this researcher's claim that aesthetics is the area of philosophy most germane to arts education theory.

The American philosopher Beardsley (1970b) has provided a suggestive (though, in places, tantalisingly inexplicit) account of the

relationship between aesthetic and educational theory. His most important contribution to an understanding of this relationship has been to point out that aesthetics, which he described as 'essentially metacriticism' (p.3), can and should be 'used' by arts education theorists to guide their thinking about both the content and methods of instruction. He described this as a 'conceptual crossover' in which an aesthetic concept is 'clarified', not merely to be '... taken over directly into instructional theory', but to shed light on the pedagogical process itself. Beardsley's suggestion led this researcher to ask what clarifying the concept of artistic intention might mean for the 'what', the 'how' and, most importantly, the 'why' of a pedagogy of aesthetics and criticism (see Chaps. 6.2 & 7.3).

#### 2.4 Three Categories of Research in the Philosophy of Education

Reid's designation of 'synthetic' research in the philosophy of education and Beardsley's notion of 'conceptual crossover' both appear to provide some theoretical basis for validating the present enquiry as research. But more is needed. At the time the enquiry began, the question was posed: what precedents existed in British philosophy of education for the kind of strategy hinted at thus far, and what of the contributions of art education researchers?

In his An Introduction to Philosophical Research, Beck (1981, p.10) identified '... three common types of philosophical thesis to be submitted at British universities in recent times', namely:

...Curricular Research (research into some particular sector of the school curriculum), Conceptual Research (involving a study in depth of a single or very limited number of concepts) and the Critical Review kind of study (by which is meant an examination of the ideas of particular thinkers or theories). (ibid., emphases added).

A consideration of his three categories is germane to the present research because his discussion of 'method' enables clarification and comparison of alternative strategies to be made with the aim of identifying one which is compatible with 'synthetic' research.

#### 2.4.1 Curricular Research

Beck's definition of Curricular Research (ibid., pp.10-15) refers specifically to studies which have as their starting point an issue or problem located in curriculum theory and practice. Briefly, such research is field-generated. In contrast, the present research began with a theoretical dispute located in the discipline of aesthetics, that is, at one remove from curriculum theory and practice, and then proceeded to a consideration of its curricular implications. Nevertheless, in common with what Beck had to say about curricular research as a whole, it is centrally concerned with epistemological problems, in particular with '... studying problems of what should be' (Engelhart, 1972, Chap.15; cf. Travers, 1978, p.105).

#### 2.4.2 Conceptual Research

At the heart of Beck's category of Conceptual Research is linguistic analysis. This involves the close, critical examination of key concepts in education with a view to exposing error and confusion in the use of language; it thereby achieves clarification of meaning and provides a firmer theoretical basis for improving practice. This category is equatable, in the first instance, with Reid's designation of analytical research in the philosophy of education, which, as previously intimated, demands a level of expertise beyond that of which most teacher-researchers are capable. (cf. Wilson, 1972, p.109;

Peters & White, 1973, p.94). Nevertheless, as also intimated above, analytical skill is a prerequisite for successful synthesizing, especially when handling concepts which are essentially contested, in Gallie's (1964, Chap. 8) sense.<sup>2</sup> Beck's definition of '... a study in depth of a single or very limited number of concepts' has, therefore, a significant bearing on an enquiry in which the concept of controversy in aesthetics is the main object of study.

#### 2.4.3 Critical Review

This category involves comparing and contrasting the ideas of theorists from different philosophical traditions with the aim of discovering conceptual 'gaps', or aspects of theory which call for more detailed treatment in the realm of pedagogy. It appears distinctly promising as a model for this enquiry. First, its primary data are theoretical texts. Second, it can be aligned with a small number of art education studies in which aspects of theory associated with particular aestheticians have been translated into principles of teaching aesthetics and criticism. These include studies by MacGregor (1971; see Chap. 3.4 below), who applied the critical methods of Sibley, Stevenson, and Weitz to the training of art teachers; Lankford (1984), who developed a 'methodology' of art criticism for classroom teaching based on the aesthetics of Merleau-Ponty; and Brookes (1988), who explored the curricular implications of beliefs about the relationship of art and reality found in the writings of Wollheim, Danto, and Marcuse.



#### 2.4.4 Reflection on the Categories

A major area of concern common to all three categories of research thesis identified by Beck is epistemology, or the investigation of problems associated with the nature and structure of knowledge. The difference between 'analytical' and 'synthetic' approaches in epistemology concerns the extent to which, in the former, conceptual analysis carried out by the researcher can be deemed original work. In 'synthetic' philosophy of education, emphasis is placed more on that which Scott (1986, p.36), writing about research in the humanities, has described as '... the re-ordering of existing knowledge'. 'Originality' appears, therefore, to consist of making connections between aspects of theory not previously conjoined, thereby generating fresh insights or perspectives on substantive issues.

Beck's alignment is with the Anglo-American tradition of analytical philosophy: a tradition which dominated philosophy of education in the 1960s and early 1970s and which remains highly influential. Comparing Beck's categories in the light of Reid's and Beardsley's comments suggests that though each category is relevant to the present research in varying degrees, none is sufficiently suitable as a model. The partial lack of fit with Beck's categories is thought to spring from the fact that analytical philosophy is geared to hypothetico-deductive reasoning, whereas the present research is more readily identified as open-ended and exploratory.

It was stated in Chapter 1 that the research as a whole is theory-oriented. The overriding need has been for a formulation of research

principles with which to validate the attempt to apply one field of theory to another. It was recognized at the start of the research that an appropriate research stance would be characterized as 'emergent' rather than 'preordinate', that is, it would allow for a developing pattern of clarification, comparison, and cross-referencing of extant theoretical 'data' leading to a formulation of pedagogical principles. With this in mind, it is necessary to examine research theory on a broader footing than that of analytical philosophy of education.

The need was for a strategy that was theoretical in origin and an emphasis which facilitated the application of one realm of theory to another, and also which helped to inform the current state of curricular theorizing about the nature and practice of art criticism. The strategy had to allow for an emerging pattern of clarification, comparison, and cross-referencing of extant theoretical 'data' leading to a set of conclusions and recommendations of theoretical and practical relevance.

## 2.5 'Paradigms' in the Philosophy of Education

In his review of British educational philosophy in the 1970s, Aspin (1982) has observed that the question 'What counts as philosophy of education?' has become increasingly problematic with the gradual emergence of a number of research 'paradigms' (pp.14-17, emphasis added). The various paradigms he identified, namely, 'Utilitarian, phenomenological, relativist/pluralist, historical materialist, transcendental...' are additional to and, in some respects, interactive with the still highly influential analytical tradition.

They are characterized by '... serious-minded and purposeful enquiry into ... questions of the meaning of language and the nature of learning, knowledge and understanding.' (ibid., p.14). In line with the analytical tradition, they are centrally concerned with epistemology. Equally, in line with recent analytical philosophy of education, they are concerned with applying philosophy or bringing its insights to bear upon '... substantive matters of teaching and learning.' (ibid.). Very few philosophical studies in art education appear to have been published, however, in which the researcher is clearly aligned with one or other of the paradigms identified by Aspin. In the absence of suitable precedents, it was therefore necessary to work within the framework of (art) education research as a whole.

## 2.6 Paradigms of Art Education Research: Their Relevance for Enquiry into Theoretical Issues.

Educational research in general reflects what a number of authorities have come to recognize as two broad theoretical orientations or 'paradigms' (Alexander, 1980): on the one hand, the 'scientific' or 'empirical/analytic' paradigm and, on the other, the 'naturalistic' or 'qualitative' (ibid., cf. Bellack, 1978; Stenhouse, 1978; Burgess, 1985; Eisner, 1985; Cohen & Marion, 1985). According to Alexander, the former is characterized by 'preordinate design' and the testing of 'preformulated hypotheses'; whereas research design based on the latter '... emerges during the investigation and is in constant flux as new information is processed and acted upon' (ibid., p.38). The present enquiry, which for reasons stated above is both emergent in approach and theoretical in emphasis, appears, on balance, to correspond to the naturalistic or qualitative paradigm; although,

unlike the vast majority of studies of this kind which investigate classroom events by means of observation techniques, it focuses on theoretical texts in the form of books, articles, conference papers, etc.

A distinction between opposing paradigms in art education has also been made by the Canadian art educator Pearse (1983). His position, which draws heavily on the social theory of Habermas and the educational theory of Aoki, represents one of the few attempts by an art educator to categorize art education research as a whole in terms of underlying paradigms. A careful examination of Pearse's account of the 'Empirical/Analytic', 'Interpretive/Hermeneutic', and 'Critical/Theoretic' paradigms assisted this researcher's efforts at the end of the research period to formulate investigative principles which were at least implicit in the approach overall.

#### 2.6.1 Empirical/Analytic

The approach adopted in the present research is clearly not concerned with the hypothetico-deductive reasoning and psycho-statistical procedures typical of this paradigm, as exemplified by descriptive, experimental and quasi-experimental research designs. Nevertheless, it is not so clearly dissociated from the dominant philosophical positions underlying the Empirical/Analytic paradigm, namely, positivism and, in particular, rationalism. According to Eisner (1985), 'academic rationalism' assumes that

... within the various fields to be taught, the very best content, and the most intellectually significant ideas, should be what students encounter. (p.67, emphasis added)

Leaving aside the problem of deciding what constitutes the 'best' content in each field, the assumption which underpins this definition of rationalism, namely, that knowledge-content ought to be the starting point and main focus of the curriculum, is fundamental to the present research. The concept of artistic intention, identified as the 'principal controversy' of contemporary aesthetics, self-evidently belongs to Eisner's classification of 'intellectually significant ideas'.

The present research can be aligned with rationalism, but this alignment must be carefully qualified in the light of the critique of rationalism in education by critical theorists such as Kelly (1986) and Carr & Kemmis (1986). Kelly, for example, challenged what he described as rationalist assumptions about '... the appropriateness and effectiveness of knowledge-content as a starting point for curriculum planning'. His chief criticism is that rationalism entails '... a search for essentialist meanings and values' which leads inevitably to an 'ossification and reification of knowledge' and a '... futile search for a single theory of curriculum development'. He concluded that '... the issue rests between curriculum as content and curriculum as process' (ibid., p.153, emphases added).

The American educator and critical theorist Popkewitz (1987) has also attacked the rationalist assumptions of '... the discipline-centred curriculum movement of the 1960s (in the U.S.A.) ... which made concepts things to be taught' (ibid., p.340, emphasis added). He suggested that such an approach to curriculum

... ignored the debate about knowledge in the disciplines, the different ways concepts are defined by various intellectual traditions, and the social values that underlie the scholarly debates. (ibid.)

For Popkewitz (and Kelly) knowledge content is not static; moreover, epistemological disputes are not purely philosophical but socio-political as well. Over against 'technocratic rationalism' or 'instrumental rationality' he insisted that:

There is no one method for 'being rational'. Our contemporary situation seems to offer us a pluralism of rationalities by which to 'make sense' of our daily life. (p. 351)

These are highly critical of the rationalistic assumptions underlying subject-centred approaches to curriculum construction; however, the present enquiry, though subject-centred, implies a different kind of rationalism, namely an investigation of the curricular implications of specific areas of aesthetic controversy. The notion of controversy suggests not a static, reified, ossified account of knowledge, but one that resonates with the fundamental tensions within a discipline or field of knowledge, laying bare its ambiguities and conceptual untidiness. The 'rationalism' applicable to the present enquiry is one that not only begins and constantly refers to knowledge-content, but which also conceives of knowledge as a dynamic structure, that is, as revisionary and pluralistic (Schwab, 1964, pp.28-30; see also Inlow, 1966, p.15 f.; King & Brownell, 1966).

#### 2.6.2 Interpretive/Hermeneutic

According to Pearce, researchers working within the Interpretive/Hermeneutic paradigm seek '... situational knowledge, the knowing of the structure of interpretative meanings' (op. cit.,

p.160). Typically, they investigate the social reality of classrooms (Burgess, 1985, p.8) and conduct their investigations by means of a range of observation techniques drawn from fields in which the interpretation of human transactions is central, for example, anthropology and ethnography. The kind of strategy they employ '... emerges during the investigation and is in constant flux as new information is processed and acted upon' (Alexander, op cit.).<sup>3</sup> Social reality, by its very complexity, requires such strategies; however, the present research focuses not on the data of natural settings but on the 'data' of theoretical materials which, on the face of it, appear too static, too contrived, to invite naturalistic investigation.

However, in this researcher's view, it is a misconception to equate the terms 'naturalistic' and 'interpretive'. The former refers specifically to the investigation of natural settings, whereas the latter, a broader term, designates enquiry with regard to both natural settings and literary texts, as in the Continental tradition of hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969; Ricoeur, 1971). Social reality is a fitting analogy of literary texts if the latter are viewed less as stable structures having fixed meanings than as relatively unstable structures, the meanings of which remain open to continual interpretation. The shifting, multi-layered character of social settings is directly analogous to the present research focus on the curricular implications of controversy in aesthetics, because controversy reveals knowledge to be, at least in part, revisionary and pluralistic. Glaser and Strauss (1967), in their classic formulation of naturalistic enquiry The Discovery of Grounded Theory, captured the

essence of the analogy between social reality and literary texts when they claimed that:

There are some striking similarities - sometimes obvious although often overlooked - between field work and library research. When someone stands in the library stacks, he is, metaphorically, surrounded by voices begging to be heard. Every book, every magazine article, represents at least one person who is equivalent to the anthropologist's informant or the sociologist's interviewee. In those publications, people converse, announce positions, argue with a range of eloquence, and describe events or scenes in ways entirely comparable to what is seen and heard during field work. The researcher needs only to discover the voices in the library to release them for his analytical use. (p.163)

This characterization of research gives grounds for the consideration that theory-dominated enquiry may be conducted quasi-phenomenologically. Typically, the objects of such investigation are the actual words and phrases of particular realms of discourse:

... field workers frequently 'track down' the meaning of a key word that they notice people are using constantly ... (so) in library research one may be similarly struck by key words. (ibid., p.166).

Researching key words such as 'controversy' and 'intention' led, as the enquiry unfolded, to the 'discovery' of other related words and phrases, such as: The Intentional Fallacy, The Ontological Status of the Artwork (indeed, the very terms ontology and artwork), Contextualism, Pluralism, Eclecticism, and so forth. The enquiry involved an in-depth comparative study of the meaning, or rather meanings, in use of such words and phrases, and others related to them, across a wide range of discourses, including art education theory, literature education theory, general curriculum theory, art theory, literary theory, critical writings, the history of art, and philosophical aesthetics.



The nearest parallel in mainstream educational research literature to the 'voices in a library' strategy advocated by Glaser and Strauss appears to be that which Engelhart (1972) and others have termed 'curriculum research'. In language somewhat reminiscent of that used by Glaser and Strauss, Engelhart has described the kind of investigator who works in this mode as:

Using the procedures of the (sic) philosophical method, (he) includes the results of his own experience and ferrets out the observations and beliefs of other persons. He draws upon principles from related fields. He is especially sensitive to implications, to values, to underlying purposes. (p.470, emphases added)

According to Engelhart, curriculum research addresses larger questions relating to 'the goals or objectives of education; in other words, with problems of what should be' (ibid.). This characterization is reminiscent of the probing, questioning approach of investigators who adopt Pearse's Interpretive/Hermeneutic stance; it recalls, particularly, the phenomenologists' emphasis on intersubjectivity, namely, the '... understanding of contextual meaning from the perspectives of the participants' (Pearse, op. cit., p.161). In this enquiry, the 'participants' are the theorists (aestheticians, litterateurs, and educators) whose writings constitute 'data'. Intersubjectivity was also pursued through a policy of individual consultation with academics working in the theoretical fields outlined above. This approach is comparable to the seeking and establishing of truth in historical research. As Stenhouse (1978) has observed:

For verification, history depends upon a communal critical discussion of evidence which is accessible on the same terms to all scholars, that is, the achievement of a critical intersubjectivity. (p.22, emphasis added)

In brief, the Interpretive/Hermeneutic paradigm appears to be, in a number of respects, a fitting model for the present research. Its relevance is recognized, in particular, with regard to the interpretation of texts, in this case of theoretical texts located mainly in the fields of philosophical aesthetics, literature studies and art education. The emergent investigation of competing standpoints in philosophical aesthetics can be viewed as a paradigm case of educational enquiry into the controversial aspects of knowledge per se. This would involve the description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of different theoretical standpoints; an approach which anticipates Pearse's third paradigm of educational research, namely, the Critical/Theoretic.

### 2.6.3 Critical/Theoretic

According to Pearse, this paradigm

... takes meanings, the essences, and the understandings of multiple realities gained from the situational-interpretative orientation and adds the critical dimension. (op. cit., p.161)

The emphasis of researchers working within it is on achieving contextual and intersubjective understanding of the social world in order to intervene in the educational process and thereby improve the quality of society. This objective is realized in the educational sphere through researchers attempting '... to make problematic what is taken for granted and to make explicit and to question that which underlies our school and community experiences' (ibid., p.162). This interventionist stance is directed, in particular, to the emancipation of learners' thinking through the development of their critical faculties.

The focus of this enquiry on exploring the curricular implications of aspects of controversy (e.g., artistic intention) is, self-evidently, a paradigm case of 'problematizing' taken-for-granted knowledge. Pearse's Critical-Theoretic orientation, as an extension of the Interpretive-Hermeneutic (Pearse, op. cit., p.161), views knowledge content, not as an unassailable given 'objective' reality (as in positivism) but as a socially organized and transmitted commodity which serves political ends. A Critical-Theoretic orientation in curriculum research is thus motivated by the desire to examine the relationship between knowledge and society and to expose the function of knowledge in perpetuating societal inequalities (cf. Carr & Kemmis, op. cit.; Kelly, op. cit.; Gibson, 1986).

The Critical/Theoretic paradigm is especially relevant for educational researchers, such as this one, who have sought to investigate an aspect of the epistemological foundations of the 'Geisteswissenschaften', or humanistic disciplines. The American art educator Eisner (1985) has addressed the question: What counts as a Ph.D. in these disciplines? According to him:

Doctoral programs (sic) socialize students to believe that the most dependable procedure one can use to obtain knowledge is through science and that respectable inquiry in education, at least respectable empirical inquiry, is scientific in character. To use other methods, to employ metaphor, analogy, simile, or other poetic devices, is to lack rigor (sic). (p.218)

His claim is that art criticism, though couched in poetic language, is nevertheless 'an empirical undertaking' (ibid., p.217) which is potentially as rigorous a model for reflective, systematic enquiry as the more established 'scientific' model.

In a similar vein, the literary theorist Frye (1973, pp.3-7) has suggested that the dominance of 'scientific' method in all areas of scholarship and research is symptomatic of a dualistic view of reality. He insisted that 'literature' (and, by implication, art) '... is a structure' which '... can be studied in sequence like anything else', and that '... the entire study of it can assume a scientific shape'. (ibid., p.6). By 'scientific', Frye had in mind

... a future development of science in which the social sciences will have discovered the fact that they are equidistant from the humanities and the physical sciences, and are as closely related to the former as to the latter. (p.6)

The emphasis in both cases is on structure. The 'objects' of enquiry, whether artworks, educational programmes, or philosophical issues, are not inchoate; such varied objects exhibit a large degree of structural coherence and consistency, which makes possible the task of investigating their puzzling features. The requirements of this enquiry seem, however, to be less well served by the model of the art critic than by that of the metacritic, or aesthetician, that is, the researcher working within the Critical/Theoretic paradigm whose approach leans more to the theoretic than the critical. This is because the educational metacritic would view knowledge in terms, not only of philosophy, but of sociology, psychology, and politics, and would seek to apply insights from these fields to the substantive problems of curriculum theory and practice.

#### 2.6.4 Reflection on the Paradigms

In summary, the three paradigms have varying degrees of relevance for the current research. The Empirical/Analytic paradigm is the least relevant, for whilst the 'academic rationalism' associated with it is

thought to underlie discipline-based curriculum research as a whole, the static view of knowledge which rationalism often entails is believed not to be applicable to this investigation. This is because the focus on the controversy over intention reveals a dynamic rather than a static view of the discipline of aesthetics. Pearse's Interpretive/Hermeneutic paradigm contains ideas compatible with the enquiry's 'emergent' approach to the 'data' of theoretical texts, namely, contextuality and intersubjectivity. Nevertheless, it is relevant only in part; for whilst hermeneutics in educational research has been traditionally linked to textual interpretation, it has come to be applied almost exclusively in recent research to the direct, experiential investigation of 'natural' settings, such as classrooms. This change of emphasis is reflected in Pearse's characterization of his third paradigm, the Critical/Theoretic, which he described as an 'extension' of the Interpretive/Hermeneutic. This appears to have the most relevance because it presupposes criticism to be a prototypic model for research. Nevertheless, though there are different kinds of art criticism in practice, not to mention competing stances on the nature of aesthetic theory underlying such criticisms, it was thought more appropriate in the present enquiry to stress the prototypic model of metacriticism rather than criticism, especially in view of this researcher's concern to explore the pedagogical implications of controversy in philosophical aesthetics.

## 2.7 Metacriticism and Methodology

Reference was made earlier to the aim of developing a 'pedagogy of aesthetics and criticism' (Chap.2.2). This might be more aptly stated as a 'pedagogy of the aesthetics of criticism', since the focus of

this research is on exploring the pedagogical implications of controversy in aesthetics, and, as with any examination of controversy, this entails the scrutiny of theories (i.e., competing theories) underlying the practice of criticism. The research emphasis in this respect is less on what critics do than on what aestheticians say that critics do. While this may appear to be a fine distinction, it does have an important bearing on the level of specificity of research outcomes and recommendations. A research enquiry into the aesthetics of criticism is likely to be rather less specific in its recommendations for art educators than one in which critical activity is investigated as a pedagogical focus. The latter is more likely to lead to prescription than the former.

The aesthetics of criticism is 'essentially metacriticism' because it involves exploring theories beneath the practice of criticism (Beardsley, op. cit., p.3; see Chap. 2.3). Moreover, Pearse's Critical/Theoretic paradigm has been shown to imply the application of a metacritic-as-researcher model when the research approach is envisaged as leaning more to the theoretic than the critical (see Chap. 2.6.3). This linking of metacriticism with research has clear precedents in research literature, for not only has the idea been put forward in recent years that critical strategies can be applied, analogously, to the interpretation and evaluation of school curricula, hence the term 'curriculum criticism' (Willis, 1978; Eisner, 1985), but also a number of theorists have proposed the aesthetician, or metacritic, as an appropriate model from which to derive strategies for art education research (Wilson, 1974; Geahigan, 1980, 1983; Hamblen, 1985, 1987). Wilson (ibid., p.6), in particular, has

distinguished between art education researchers who '... deal with more empirical matters' and those who '... deal with more theoretical issues'. He likened the former to art critics because they are involved in '... assessing the immediate and specific'; the latter he likened to aestheticians.

Hence, 'metacriticism' as a model for method appears applicable not only to the field of aesthetics, but also to both pedagogy (teaching the aesthetics of criticism) and research (investigating the relationship of aesthetic theory and educational theory with reference to underlying conceptual standpoints). 'Metacriticism' therefore appears to supply an appropriate model for investigating the relation of theory to method in terms of both the subject matter and the function of the present enquiry, as outlined in the Introduction to this chapter.

Nevertheless, whether metacriticism is viewed in the context of aesthetics, teaching, or research, it is a term which admits of some degree of flexibility. As far as pedagogical method is concerned, metacriticism might be conceived of as a strategy for analyzing competing stances on criticism with a view to seeking a resolution of the conceptual problems involved. Alternatively, it might be conceived of as a strategy aimed at clarifying the points of disagreement between competing stances, but in the belief that a resolution of conceptual problems is largely unattainable. The former conception would lead to a choice being made between competing stances, albeit as a result of fair and objective analysis; the latter

would be more inclined to a pluralistic position in which the aim would be to achieve balance and representativeness rather than an order of preference. The implication is that 'metacriticism' can accommodate at least these two definitions and can lead, accordingly, to rather different approaches.

'Metacriticism' has been defined in subtly different ways by theorists within the discourse of art education theory. In his analysis of the concept, the American art educator Geahigan (1980) has distinguished between, on the one hand, 'reportive definitions' which aim to present a consensus view of the meaning of a term in a specific area of discourse and, on the other, 'stipulative definitions' which a writer

... presents for use only in the context in which it is presented ... in order to facilitate the discussion at hand.  
(p.55)

He pointed out that difficulties in communication occur when

... within the same context of discussion, a writer surreptitiously shifts between the stipulated meaning and the ordinary meaning of the term being defined. (p.56)

Geahigan has sought consciously to avoid this logical error by consistently applying a stipulative definition: he has stated, unequivocally, that

... inquiry into art criticism, or 'metacritical inquiry' as I shall label it, would seem to be an important part of the ongoing research of the field' (of art education). (p.54, emphasis added).

'Inquiry into' or 'theorizing about' art criticism differs from Ecker's (1973) definition of the term in his seminal article Analyzing Children's Talk about Art. Ecker identified five levels of enquiry:



If we count art production and appreciation as the first level of inquiry, we find children (1) creating and appreciating art, (2) criticizing it, and (3) challenging or supporting the judgement of others, whether adult or children. Moreover, we find them (4) theorizing about the nature of art and criticism, and (5) analyzing theories and arguments. (p.70)

What Geahigan defined as metacriticism, Ecker here defined as theory (level 4) and metatheory (level 5).

A further example drawn from the discourse of literary criticism (Rodway, 1982) defines metacriticism in social, psychological, and political terms:

... criticism is concerned with what the work is, metacriticism with what it is (usually unwittingly) a sign of, and scholarship with information about it. To establish the correct text of a Shakespeare play would be scholarship. To use the play as a guide to the refinements of Elizabethan modes of feeling, thinking or dressing, or to the personality of Shakespeare; or, as many Marxist critics would, to assess it in terms of its likely political effects - all these would be metacritical activities. To establish the meaning and qualities of the play itself and assess their literary value would be criticism. (p.2, emphases in orig.)

Given such divergent views, arriving at a reportive definition of the term metacriticism appears almost an impossible task. Hence, a stipulative definition, namely, Geahigan's (op. cit.) 'inquiry into' or 'theorizing about' art criticism, is proposed as broadly applicable to this enquiry's emphasis on the controversy over intention and the competing theoretical positions related to it.

However, before the research strategy for the present enquiry can be classed as metacriticism, a more general philosophical term, 'methodology', must be considered. Methodology conveys the sense of

enquiring into theoretical stances (on criticism) through an analysis of method. For example, in his Dictionary of Philosophy, Flew (1979) defined methodology as:

The study of method, usually covering the procedures and aims of a particular discipline, and enquiry into the way in which that discipline is organized. (p.230)

Lotz (1972) has supplied an even more succinct definition:

The scientific investigation of the problems concerned with method is called 'methodology'. (pp.249-250)

The term methodology is sometimes used interchangeably with method, but this is an incorrect usage, since in both the above sources it is clearly identified as the activity of studying method and the theory that lies beneath it. They indicate that it readily accommodates a reportive definition. Kaelin (1964), writing in the context of literature education, has indicated also that the methodology of (literary) criticism is equatable with philosophical aesthetics. First he claimed that:

The program (sic) for instruction in any field of intellectual endeavor (sic) depends upon methods, and any discourse upon methods to be employed in the solution of an intellectual problem is rightfully termed 'methodology'. (p.289)

Next he identified the two essential elements of a successful programme for teaching criticism as: (i) '... the laying down of a workable method of analysis' that is itself based on '... a methodologically sound aesthetic theory', and (ii) '... "travaux pratiques" in the use of the method laid down' (ibid.). Methodological enquiry, as envisaged by Kaelin, supplies a framework with which to examine the theoretical adequacy of the 'conceptual

bases' (cf. McErlane, 1974) underlying art curriculum content, thereby ensuring that the relationship of theory and method is made both coherent and consistent in pedagogical practice.

The term methodology is included in the discussion because it is deemed necessary to head off the kind of criticism which would dismiss the enquiry as being sterile, bookish and over-theoretical. The emphasis on methodology, that is, on exploring the inseparable link between theory and method, is intended to provide a sound basis on which to counter this objection. The inseparability of theory and method has been affirmed by Aspin (op. cit.), who stated that:

Education as a whole field is thought of as an area to which philosophy may be applied. (p.11)

Moreover, he claimed that research in the philosophy of education is

... contributory to the informed understanding of it (education) and the successful framing of soundly based theory in it. (ibid.)

Carr (1986) has also repudiated an artificial distinction between

... 'philosophical' questions about the nature of educational theory and 'non-philosophical' questions about how this theory relates to practice ... ideas about the nature of educational theory are always ideas about the nature of educational practice and always incorporate a latent conception of how, in practice, theory should be used. (p.177, emphasis added)

It is proposed that the clarification of theory in its relationship to method is an essential prerequisite for improving practice. The distinction between method and practice is a central premise of the present research enterprise: method is logically derived from theory;

practice, on the other hand, is the totality of events and experiences that impinge on a particular sphere of purposive human action - as such, practice includes method. Geahigan (op. cit.) has made this distinction clearly in regard to art criticism (p.18). Method is said to arise from the philosophical analysis of language: that is, the '... sort of inquiry (which) attempts to isolate and identify the rules underlying our ability to use the term "criticism"'. On the other hand, he has defined practice as 'a polymorphous activity' which includes not only acts that are primarily related to the concept 'criticism' (i.e., critical methods), but others also that are indirectly or even tenuously related. For example, when critics produce an interpretation or evaluation of an artwork's properties we are justified in describing their activity as a more or less conscious application of critical method - it is a core activity. On the other hand, when critics attend social events connected with the launch of an exhibition this is best described as a part, albeit an important part, of their critical practice.

## 2.8 Dialectical Procedure

At an early stage of the research, the guiding principle of 'emergence' was located in the interpretive tradition of educational research and aligned with Pearse's Critical/Theoretic paradigm (Chap.2.6.3 above). This alignment was made on the assumption that criticism, or more pertinently the aesthetics of criticism, is paradigmatic not only of classroom procedures but also research method. More specifically, the concept of 'methodology' could be identified as the most appropriate description of the research

approach because it involves exploration of the links between concepts and methods through focusing on the latter.

A further related term 'dialectical procedure' could also be considered relevant to the development of a research method. It originates in reviews of a key philosophical text used in the current research (Margolis, 1980a) in which 'dialectical' is used to designate the author's general approach of analyzing the views of others adversatively in order to achieve, by means of synthesis, a sophisticated formulation of theory. However, reservations about this approach were expressed by reviewers, for example, what they alleged to be the near impossibility of achieving depth of treatment in a wide-ranging, theory-dominated study. Similar criticisms that the author's argumentation was obscure in places and overbalanced with detail (Walton, op. cit.; Schaper, op. cit.), or that it dealt summarily with the views of other theorists (Jones, 1983, p.129), could be taken as indirect warnings of the kind of dangers confronting the present research in the event of adopting this approach.

It would seem that these disadvantages of 'dialectical procedure' as a research model can be avoided only by seeking to do 'full justice' to all the viewpoints under consideration. According to Ross and Hannay (1986), 'dialectical reasoning', which they described as '... moving back and forth between opposing points of view' must be balanced by 'dialogical reasoning', namely, '... thinking critically and reciprocally within opposing points of view' (pp.10-11, emphases added). In this connection, the cultural anthropologist Geertz (1975, p.10) has also written of the need for researchers faced with a '...

multiplicity of conceptual structures' to weave back and forth in order gradually, though by no means exhaustively or definitively, to make intelligible sense of the interpretive contexts they are seeking to investigate. Geertz's recommendation that researchers working in his discipline should '... contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render (ibid., emphases added) the disparate materials they face affords a useful parallel in some respects with the general approach characteristic of the present research. This involves seeking first to analyze concepts used in separate kinds of theory with a view to achieving a private 'clarification' of issues, and then synthesizing arguments arising from the analyses in the form of a public 'communication' of principles pertinent to art education. The relevance of 'dialectical procedure' and other perspectives on research method identified in this enquiry will be reflected upon in the final chapter of the thesis.

## 2.9 Summary

The enquiry which forms the basis of this chapter has considered the factors involved in devising a research strategy for exploring the pedagogical implications of aesthetic controversy. This has proved difficult because the aims and anticipated approach of the enquiry did not at first appear to fit existing parameters of educational research. Research strategies in the philosophy of education in the U.K. were found to be of limited usefulness, though recent transatlantic studies, especially those influenced by Continental or Continentally-inspired theorizing, proved helpful as a basis for an emergent strategy corresponding with the exploratory nature of the enquiry as a whole. The Critical/Theoretic category of art education

research (Pearse) has been identified as the most appropriate model because it involves the application of interpretive research methods to the analysis of textual material.

The link between content and methods of art criticism was shown to be exceedingly complex and it was concluded that clarification of this problematic area could only be achieved by modelling the research strategy on methods of enquiry in aesthetics, namely, 'metacriticism'. However, the term 'methodology' was shown to fit the needs of the present research equally as well as 'metacriticism' but with a subtle difference: whereas the latter (on one definition) designates the task of theorizing about the content of criticism in relation to method, the former conveys the sense of clarifying this relationship by focusing on method.

To summarize: Critical/Theoretic, Metacritical and Methodological have been identified as suitable descriptors of the research strategy used in the enquiry as a whole. The term 'methodology' conveys the enquiry's emphasis on investigating the implications for pedagogical method of aesthetic controversy, such as that associated with intention. However, 'dialectical procedure' was thought to coincide closely with the kind of approach needed in the research overall. It appeared to be conducive to the investigation of opposing viewpoints and the synthesizing of arguments drawn from disparate sources. In the following chapter, an attempt will be made to identify different conceptions of critical method found in art education theory. Although existing approaches may be geared more to developing learners' direct appreciation of art than their grasp of philosophical

argument, precedents may well be found to exist for teaching not just one but a range of critical methods. Hence, the enquiry in the following chapter will take the form of an analytical review of art education texts with the aim of determining the current basis, if any, for teaching metacriticism in schools.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS OF CRITICISM AND METACRITICISM IN ART EDUCATION

#### 3.1 Introduction

Given the aim of this research, which is to explore the pedagogical implications of aesthetic controversy, it is necessary first to review the current state of theorizing about criticism and metacriticism in art education. Art criticism in the classroom can proceed without explicit reference to aesthetics, whereas metacriticism entails that learners engage in philosophical speculation about the respective merits of different critical approaches. Though criticism and metacriticism are distinct areas of pedagogical concern, the latter is an extension of the former; hence, the development of metacritical strategies in the present research depends on first achieving a sound grasp of principles and procedures of criticism available in art education texts. A distinction is also needed between teaching metacriticism and teaching aesthetics. Aesthetics is a broader term than metacriticism: it designates a range of philosophical issues concerned with the characteristics of 'beauty' as found not only in art and other aspects of the human-made environment, but also in nature (Burn & Ramsden, 1972, pp.23-24; Nwodo, 1984, pp.196-197). In this research, however, the term 'aesthetic controversy' refers specifically to philosophical issues concerned with the relationship between the ontology of art and methods of criticism.

The review is conducted primarily with reference to articles in art education journals and anthologies, although dissertations and teacher education texts are also consulted. However, the textual sources are not limited to art education: reference is also made to other kinds of theoretical writing, notably those relating to aesthetics and the history of art. Certain North American studies of seminal importance are examined in some detail (Smith, 1968; MacGregor, 1971; Feldman, 1973; Chapman, 1978). Recent studies connected with the Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) 'movement' are also consulted because these represent a reappraisal of the links between the 'productive' mode in art learning and various 'response' modes - art history, art criticism, and aesthetics (e.g., Greer, 1984; Hamblen, 1987, 1988). The DBAE protocols identify aesthetics as one of four 'components' of art education content, although it has been described by Hamblen (1987, p.71) as the 'least developed' area of art content in DBAE, both in terms of identifying alternative theories and methods of art criticism and applying them to classroom practice. If Hamblen's assessment is correct, a need exists for art educators on both sides of the Atlantic to try to make good pedagogical sense of philosophical aesthetics in conjunction with established practices in other aspects of art education. This need is particularly pressing in the U.K., given what to date has been a marked lack of involvement in metacritical enquiry among British art educators.<sup>1</sup>

In brief, the review has two objectives: (i) to identify concepts and methods associated with teaching critical diversity, and (ii) to explore the links between theories of criticism generated by

aestheticians and those that art education theorists have derived from aesthetics.

### 3.2 'Art Historian' and 'Art Critic' as Role Models: Distinctions and Interrelations

Given the stated aim of 'communicating' with a British audience (Chap. 1.2), it is important first to address the issue of teaching critical pluralism in the context of the history of art, because this is the dominant perspective on the 'study' of art<sup>2</sup> in schools in the U.K., at least to examination levels. In professional art scholarship a distinction can be drawn between, on the one hand, the history of art, which involves questions such as: how, when, where, why, by whom, and for whom, individual works were produced; and, on the other, the criticism of art, which involves questions more concerned with the nature of aesthetic value, especially in regard to a work's capacity for engaging the attention of viewers in a direct experience with the object. However, the distinction between art historian and art critic can easily be overstated. The interrelatedness of these two professional spheres also needs to be taken into account if a simplistic and thus distorted view of the kinds of activities involved is to be avoided. It is only partly correct to distinguish between, on the one hand, the art historian as an individual concerned with the circumstances of production of an artwork, and on the other, the art critic as one who views the work as a self-contained repository of aesthetic experience. Without further qualification this distinction can misleadingly imply that art critics have little interest in the historical contexts of artworks.

In the first place, there are critics (and critical theorists) who refuse to venerate the artwork by declining to view it as being in any sense a self-contained object which uniquely embodies the personal vision of the artist/author (Wolff, 1981). On the contrary, such scholars view the artwork as part of a wider process to which many individuals and institutional groups contribute. In this respect, Wolff (*ibid.*, pp. 32f & 118-119) stressed that the individuality of artistic production is an illusory notion: the romanticist myth of the artist as an unfettered creator pursuing his or her task free from worldly impingements entails acceptance of a view of artistic creation which sets up the artist as the sole agent or mediator of that creation. Against this position, she emphasized that artistic activity is a collaborative enterprise, not only in the obvious cases of film production, ballet, opera, and the like, but also in the arts of painting, sculpture, poetry and novel writing. Art activity, even in its most esoteric and private manifestations, is parasitic on institutionalized practices, including those that relate to the distribution and reception of artistic forms (cf. Becker, 1982; Walker, 1983). Scholars who view art in this way also view as problematic any attempt clearly to define what is internal, and what external, to the artwork.

The polarisation of viewpoints among theorists and practitioners of art criticism appears to be closely paralleled in the sphere of the history of art. In this respect, Kleinbauer (*op. cit.*, p.37f) has distinguished between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' approaches in art scholarship. He defined intrinsic approaches as those in which scholars focused primarily on the physical, formal and aesthetic

properties of particular works. External factors, such as the cultural context in which a work is produced, or information about an artist's life, are viewed by such scholars as of secondary importance. Kleinbauer identified several 'genres of modern scholarship' which fall within an 'intrinsic' perspective: these include (i) the technical analysis of artworks, for example, the use of X-rays and photomicrographs, and 'chemical tests of pigments' (pp.38-40); (ii) connoisseurship, described as an 'empirical method' which uses the techniques of archaeology and philology to investigate 'questions of authenticity and attribution' (pp.43-48); (iii) stylistic analysis, a method promulgated by Wolfflin, in which the attempt is made to classify artworks chronologically according to formalist principles; and (iv) iconographic analysis, a method largely associated with the writings of Panofsky, in which the imagery of an artwork is first examined in its details in order to uncover conventional meanings, and then analysed at a deeper level (iconology) to '... discover and interpret symbolic values' (p.55) that reflect the work's cultural ambience.

Kleinbauer (p.67f.) defined 'extrinsic' approaches to the study of art as 'more broadly based' than intrinsic ones. He claimed that scholarship of this type tends not to concentrate on the specificity of the artwork, that is, as a unique object embodying symbolic and formal elements; instead it attends principally to external data and utilizes the paradigms and methods of the social sciences for art historical research. He identified several 'genres of modern scholarship' which fall within an 'extrinsic' perspective: these include, (i) artistic biography (pp. 67-70); (ii) the study of

'... psychological and psychoanalytic aspects of artistic creation' (p.70f.); (iii) various sociological explanations of art by Marxists and others, for example, 'causal' or deterministic explanations (p.77) in which artworks are viewed as the inevitable products of social, political, and economic factors; and 'expressive' explanations in which it is maintained that art be viewed as a reflection of society (p.78); and (iv) 'cultural history' (p.89f.), a panoramic conception, in which the visual arts are studied as part of a larger project to enhance understanding of the development of patterns of general culture, including the history of ideas (*Geistesgeschichte*).

Kleinbauer's intrinsic/extrinsic distinction, although hedged about with caveats and qualifications, can easily be pressed too far: its validity and appeal largely depend on whether one accepts his commitment to the primacy of intrinsic methods. By contrast, scholars whose work is (on Kleinbauer's definition) 'extrinsic' typically act on the assumption that what is internal, and what external, to the artwork cannot be clearly demarcated. Kleinbauer's personal stance in regard to this issue is revealed particularly by his account of sociological explanations: in this connection, he stressed that non-Marxist scholars tended to investigate the interconnections between specific artworks and the cultural contexts of those works without seeking, as in the case of Marxists, to engage in a critique of social structures from the standpoint of an overriding theory of culture. He cited, as an example, the subject of patronage as providing a rich source of material for scholars who in this way attempted to investigate the dynamics of art and society (p.82). In the nearly two decades since Kleinbauer's book was first published the (mainly

Marxist) sociological analysis of art as ideology has mushroomed (Taylor, 1984, p.77): writers in this tradition have sought not merely to cast light on the links between art and general culture, but have mounted a trenchant critique of the assumptions underlying the mechanisms by which the history of art is both created and disseminated.

A principal tenet of the sociological critique is that the term 'history of art' is problematic: this indicates that it is both misleading and naively uncritical to accept it for consideration without recognizing that, as in the case of the term 'literature', it conceals a web of unexamined ideological assumptions (Wolff, 1983, pp.13-15). Specifically, traditional history of art has been criticized for serving the interests of elitist social groups (Berger, 1972; Wolff, 1981, pp.28-29; 1983, p.17), for perpetuating discredited notions such as 'the artist as genius' and 'the art work as life-enhancing object' (Clark, 1974, p.562; Pollock, 1982, p.4; Garb, 1984, pp.347-348), and for purveying a restrictive, Westernized view of 'high art' which effectively downgrades so-called popular, folk, and non-Western art forms (Sloan, 1972, p.111). It is claimed that the central failing of much traditional history of art is that it is largely an 'ahistorical' enterprise (Wolff, 1981, pp.10-12; Pollock, op. cit., pp.6-7) which, in contrast to the academic discipline of history, attaches little importance to philosophical reflectiveness (Sloan, op. cit., p.107). Consequently, art historians need a 'second-order discourse' (Baldwin, Harrison, & Ramsden, 1981, pp.450-453) in order that they might free themselves from the circularity of their own language.

In this connection, Walker (1983) distinguished between 'art history' and 'the history of art' and criticized the tendency among scholars to employ such terms interchangeably. According to Walker, 'Art history is the name of an intellectual, theoretical discipline whose object of study is the history of art'. This 'discipline' produces 'multiple histories .... of art' (p.73, emphases in orig.) through analyses of the causal connections between the production, distribution, and reception of specific works, styles, genres, or schools of artists. The notion of art as a realm of purely 'aesthetic' concern is thus replaced by one which emphasizes process and the interplay of aesthetic and non-aesthetic factors. Walker also pointed out that art historians as a professional body are not sufficiently aware of the 'problems of history-writing' and are not, therefore, sufficiently critical of their own productions (ibid.).

The sociological critique, which recently has been labelled 'The New Art History' (Rees & Borzello, 1986), is characteristically concerned with analyzing the social aspects of art in relation to the theoretical underpinnings of practice. This tendency is equivalent to metacriticism, for just as the diversity of theory and practice in criticism is the focus of metacritical enquiry, so the diversity of theory and practice in the history of art is the focus of 'The New Art History'. This diversity, which is common to both domains, reveals a polarisation between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' approaches, which it is claimed are fundamentally linked to divergent conceptions of the nature and limits of the artwork and the kinds of evidence required to settle interpretive disputes. Briefly, art criticism and the history of art equally manifest a range of approaches which, at a deeper



level, are a reflection of different theoretical assumptions about the nature of art and, indeed, life itself.

Having established that methodological diversity is a chief characteristic of the disciplines of art scholarship, further investigation is necessary to ascertain whether art education theorists have explored its implications for teaching. Given the links already described between art criticism and the history of art, the question arises as to whether pedagogical insights in this area might provide some clues as to how to teach criticism from a theoretical (that is, a metacritical) standpoint.

### 3.3 Teaching a Range of Approaches to the History and Criticism of Art

Since the early 1970s strenuous attempts have been made by art education theorists in both the U.S.A. and the U.K. to broaden the base of art studies under the banner of 'aesthetic education'. Major developments such as CEMREL<sup>3</sup> and the Journal of Aesthetic Education have signalled a burgeoning interest in the pluralistic interconnectedness of the arts. In this respect, Feldman (1981, p.149) has indicated that the move towards aesthetic education was based on a 'comprehensive theory of art' and that it had arisen in response to an 'overemphasis on the teaching of technique'; he also maintained (ibid., cf. p.143) that the anthropological perspective of aesthetic education gave it greater potential than a linear, chronological approach to teaching the history of art.

A comprehensive conception of art lies behind influential moves in the U.S.A. and U.K. (Eisner, 1972; Allison, 1982) aimed at broadening the

scope and effectiveness of art teaching through emphasizing the importance of historical and critical modes of art experience and the dynamic interrelatedness which obtains between such activities and the productive aspects of art learning.

Allison's (1982) curriculum model is currently influential both in the U.K. and in several countries overseas. Allison identified four domains of art experience: the Expressive/Productive, the Perceptual, the Analytical/Critical, and the Historical/Cultural. He particularly stressed that the four domains, although theoretically distinguishable, are practically inseparable:

In reality all the four domains are unavoidably interdependent and interactive with each other. However, any art or design object, activity, source, purpose, reaction or response can be considered by giving emphasis to or concentration on one of the domains as well as in terms of the relationship of that domain to the others. Nevertheless, even if emphasis is given to any one domain, its relationship to and effects from or on the other domains is unavoidable. (p.62).

Allison's main purpose in publishing his model was to make art educators more aware of the interrelations between the different domains of art experience in order that they might be encouraged to link them more explicitly in their teaching. For example, the existence of art critics, their function in relation to art and society, and the methods and procedures they employ, provide an essential model for pedagogy. On this argument, a teacher who does not engage young people in critically appraising artworks is presenting a seriously distorted image of the subject 'art'. It was Allison's hope that classroom teachers who tended unwittingly to concentrate on one or two of the domains to the exclusion of the

others might be challenged to provide a more balanced learning experience for their pupils.<sup>4</sup>

Allison is a leading contributor to what has become '... a significant body of opinion seeking to broaden the base' (Price, 1989, p.113) of art in schools. According to Price it has arisen partly under the influence of literature and media studies, and partly out of a growing awareness of the artistic importance of non-European cultural products. She concluded that:

An 'Art History and Critical Studies' programme needs to establish the conditions in which the principle of pluralism in visual representation can be recognised and valued. (p.120, emphasis added).

The 'principle of pluralism' which Price advocated was made in response to the 'formal diversity' of world art (p.121). The present enquiry is more concerned, however, with making pedagogical sense of critical diversity in respect of artworks as a genus or class of entities. Such an approach implies both an application of and a reflection on critical methods: it suggests that it would be introduced to learners through exercises in practical criticism, with the object of developing their understanding of the link between concepts and methods of criticism, whilst concurrently enhancing and enriching their aesthetic appreciation of individual works. 'Formal diversity' and 'critical diversity' are not easy to differentiate because different kinds of art give rise to corresponding kinds of criticism, and this implies that critical concepts may be inappropriately applied in given cases. For example, a European art critical text in which the formal qualities of an African woodcarving

are compared with 'the flying buttresses of a Gothic Cathedral' (Redfield, 1959, pp. 40-42). If such inappropriateness results from ignorance, insensitivity, Euro-ethnocentrism, and the like, then it is clearly misguided and should form no part of an education in critical diversity. Nevertheless, a case can be made for deliberately creating a mismatch of artwork and critical mode with the object of producing livelier criticism (Booth, 1979, p.253). (At stake here is the issue of whether artworks, as a class of entities, are repositories of fixed meanings, which in principle are accessible to interpretation; or, whether they are objects which can legitimately support rival interpretations not bound to the intentions of the artist nor to the intentional structures of the artistic community to which he or she belongs.)

In summary, the preceding discussion of the distinctions and interrelations between art criticism and the history of art reveals a range of conflicting stances which can be broadly grouped as 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' conceptions of the nature of art and concomitant methods of interpretation. Academic art historians have, in recent years, shown an increasing tendency to subject their discipline to theoretical analysis and reflection. Art education theorists have similarly come to recognize the diverse character of art historical studies and, as a consequence, have sought to broaden the scope of such studies in schools. Nevertheless, in spite of this growing awareness of the need to teach artistic pluralism, little evidence has been found to indicate that methodological diversity per se has been developed as a pedagogical focus. Moreover, no evidence

is forthcoming of attempts to link theoretical stances with compatible modes of instruction.

### 3.4 'Aesthetician' as Role Model: Alternative Critical Stances

MacGregor's (1971) doctoral study provides the main point of reference for the following discussion concerning the need to identify competing stances on the nature of criticism, with a view to considering ways in which critical concepts can be translated into pedagogical methods in art education theory and practice. Analyzing MacGregor's ideas is thought to be a helpful preparation for exploring the pedagogical implications of controversy in aesthetics because she not only identified different conceptions of criticism in art education theory, but also compared them with parallel conceptions in the field of aesthetics. Moreover, her discussion of the views of art education theorists and aestheticians supplies a useful focus for addressing the question of the extent to which talk about theory and talk about practice overlaps. The stated purpose of MacGregor's research was to design and test a '... unit of instruction for the education of prospective art teachers' (ibid., Chap.IV) which would incorporate alternative philosophical stances on the nature of art criticism. She demonstrated that teachers who were so instructed significantly developed their ability to engage in critical discourse and were thus better equipped to involve children in the same process. Her main recommendation was that trainee art teachers should be given clear guidance about alternative conceptions of art criticism and the variety of methods that arise from them.

### 3.4.1 Components of Critical Activity: A Comparison of Models

MacGregor (ibid., Chap. II) examined first the views of three prominent art education theorists - Ecker (1973), Feldman (1973), and Smith (1968) - whom she considered to be representative of distinct, though in some respects complementary, approaches to teaching art criticism. In MacGregor's view, Ecker's and Feldman's approaches were comparable because both writers considered the art critic to be the most fruitful model for pedagogical practice, whereas Smith favoured the model of aesthetician. For present purposes, however, attention will be paid to her comments on Feldman and Smith.

Feldman devised his scheme on the basis of critical practice. He employed 'the critic as model' in much the same way as an earlier generation had used 'the artist as model' as a justification for developing children's expressive potential through the production of art. The scheme first appeared in 1967 in his book Art as Image and Idea and, with slight modifications, was included in his Becoming Human Through Art (1970) and in the revision of his 1967 work under its new title Varieties of Visual Experience (1972), and since then in several journal articles. In a response to criticisms by Geahigan (1983, pp.20-21) that his scheme was rigid and not fully representative of the richness and variety of critical practice, Feldman (1984) made the following comment about his original purpose:

When I wrote about 'the form' of criticism in 1967, I was urging a reasonable method in place of no method at all ..... my earliest writing on the subject - in the 1960's - came at a time when art educators hardly acknowledged the role of criticism in teaching.  
(p.79).

The practical orientation of Feldman's scheme was readily admitted by him:

A further word about theory and practice as regards art criticism. My own theoretical contributions, such as they are, followed considerable practical experience in doing art criticism. I do not argue that doing art criticism guarantees the soundness of one's theoretical views, but I would be wary of theoretical pronouncements that are not based on a fairly substantial body of critical practice, both in teaching and in published form. It is praxis that enables us to modify our theoretical views from time to time, and it is a published record of criticism that provides a certain assurance of reliability to our students and readers. (ibid.).

Feldman, with his emphasis on the critic rather than the philosopher of criticism, advocated the use of his scheme as a model for learners openly to pursue. 'Description' here becomes more than (merely) a silent noting of the details of an artwork, but a consciously public act, in which groups of learners are encouraged to take inventory of the work as a deliberate shared strategy. In Feldman's scheme, therefore, 'critical performance', namely, the critic's direct, personal encounter with an artwork, becomes a prescribed technique: the phases are followed sequentially; the learner-critic thinks out loud.

MacGregor detected an important distinction between the views of Feldman and Smith: the former, as previously noted, based his position on the art critic as model, whereas the latter derived his theoretical justification from the philosophy of criticism. Nevertheless, she judged them to be comparable because, despite the difference in their theoretical sources, both had reached the same conclusion about the structure of critical activity, namely, that it consists of a sequence

of logically distinct, though overlapping, stages of increasingly complex thought.

Smith (1973, p.38f.), like Feldman, recognized the distinction between private and public modes of critical activity. He described 'two basic types of criticism', each of which 'performs a distinctive function': Exploratory Aesthetic Criticism and Argumentative Aesthetic Criticism. The former is almost a parallel of Feldman's scheme in that it consists of four 'overlapping phases':

1. Description, in the sense of relatively straightforward noting of the more literal aspects of objects;
2. Analysis, which attends carefully to the inter-relations of sensuous elements noted in description;
3. Characterization, which marks the peculiar nature of a work's aesthetic qualities; and
4. Interpretation, an effort to construe overall meaning.

The verbs 'noting', 'attends', and 'marks' in Smith's presentation are active components of the critic's direct, personal experience of an artwork. The phases occur in an ordered sequence that represents a progression from the relatively straightforward activity of describing the literal features of a work to that of interpreting its meaning. Thus conceived, the critic's task becomes an increasingly normative procedure in which statements of 'fact' are superseded by judgements of value. Smith's focus for determining the phases of Exploratory Aesthetic Criticism is not, in the first instance, that of critical practice: it is the logical relationship which obtains between the different phases. For example, Analysis (Phase 2) entails attending



'carefully to the interrelations of sensuous elements noted in description' (Phase 1). Thus the relationship between these two phases is a logical one: analysis presupposes that there is something to analyze; that features susceptible of description are available for analysis to focus upon. Smith's emphasis on the logicity of the sequence of phases is needed because it does not follow in practice that all critics in all circumstances follow in their thoughts the actual progression of steps that he has outlined. Criticism is a dynamic not a mechanical activity. Seasoned critics do not usually begin the task of criticism by laying aside their prejudices in order to make an inventory of all the straightforwardly descriptive features of a work before proceeding to analyze the interrelations of parts. Rather, professional critics, with their wide experience of the styles and genres of art, and armed with a prodigious array of perceptual categories, are able to dispense with the descriptive 'phase', beginning instead with a mainly interpretive hunch from which to work backwards, as it were deductively, to see if the evidence in a work supports it. Hence, in critical practice, there is an oscillation between the different phases in the logical sequence: the critic's attention moves back and forth, forming a hypothesis, noting details, analyzing the relationship between the details, perhaps on a formal level and then perhaps with reference to biographical evidence, looking again more closely to discover further details, perhaps revising the original hypothesis, and so on. The process is not strictly sequential: it is messy, variable, and as diverse in character as the critics who engage in it. In brief, Exploratory Aesthetic Criticism precedes public performance and is essential to it; however, it is, on Smith's definition, primarily a private act.

The second type of criticism that Smith identified was Argumentative Aesthetic Criticism. This, as the word 'argumentative' suggests, refers to critical activity in the arena of public discussion and debate. It is a retrospective or synoptic version of the critic's private encounter with an artwork and is couched in language that aims to persuade and even to cajole an audience to accept the critic's conclusions. At least, that is the case with 'journalistic' and 'popular' types of criticism (Feldman, 1972, pp.454-456). In 'scholarly' and 'pedagogical' criticism, however, conclusions may be more open-ended and may serve instead to guide readers into a deeper experience of a work that ultimately requires them to finish the task themselves by reaching their own assessments (ibid.).

Feldman's and Smith's concern for teaching method and technique was the outcome of more than simple necessity. There is very good reason for proceeding in the ways they suggest that has as much to do with theoretical considerations as it has with bringing a sense of order to what Ecker (1973, p.71) has described as '... the intellectual excitement of spontaneous and freewheeling discussions in the art room'. It is that aesthetic judgements ought to be -- as far as possible -- objective, and true to the 'facts' of observation. Feldman (1973) has stressed the need for critics to strive for objectivity as follows:

One of the things we have to learn in functioning as critics - whether we are adults or youngsters - is to resist the tendency to reach a premature closure of our aesthetic experience. (p.51).

The point of having a plan or procedure on which to model young people's approaches to criticism is to head off the tendency which the unskilled invariably exhibit of jumping in with their prejudices. Any scheme that encourages young people to take a detached look, to hold back the first impulse to pass summary judgement on an artwork is to be welcomed. In this connection, Feldman (op. cit.) has described the difference between the approaches of the layperson and the professional art critic as that between haphazard and ill-informed 'talk about art' and that which is 'structured' and 'organized' according to 'some kind of plan'. He has argued that art teachers (as indeed all teachers) have a responsibility to provide a clear and sequential framework within which learning experiences can be organized and learning outcomes evaluated. This much is certainly provided by his scheme, which advantageously permits art criticism in the classroom at least to get under way. Accepting the criticisms of Geahigan, mentioned earlier, that his scheme was too rigid, Feldman conceded that, as young people grow in appreciative skill, they may eventually discard such obvious critical techniques in favour of a more open approach. The principle here is that, in any learning situation, the more experienced a practitioner becomes, the less need there is for a conscious application of fundamental steps.

Smith's distinction between Exploratory Aesthetic Criticism and Argumentative Aesthetic Criticism is especially helpful in showing the relationship between the logical and operational components of criticism. The differences in critical method which MacGregor detected between Feldman and Smith appear on further analysis to be

either differences in the recommended order in which the operations are to be 'performed', or differences of emphasis in regard to particular components.

#### 3.4.2 Argumentative Aesthetic Criticism in Action

The complex character of Argumentative Aesthetic Criticism, especially the relationship of the different components or 'phases', is further brought to light by analyzing an example drawn from the writings of the art historian T.J. Clark (1973, pp.80-83), namely, his critical appraisal of Courbet's 'Burial at Ornans' (Appendix II).

Clark's opening paragraph points directly to the ambivalence of meaning in the painting and the problems which this raises for the task of interpretation. In the first sentence he described the painting as 'bizarre'; he then identified this sense of strangeness as a dissociation in the painting between an event of deep social and religious import (the funeral) and the participants' general air of apparent emotional indifference. Clark referred to this strangeness with comments like 'collective distraction' and 'the careful, ambiguous blankness of a public face'; he also stressed the innovative character of the work by contrasting it with examples of the less equivocal depictions of ritual scenes by earlier artists. By these means, Clark directed his readers' attention, in the first instance, to the feeling tone of the work, which, paradoxically, presents both the major area of difficulty for interpretation and the way of entry into its meaning and significance.

In the second through to the sixth paragraphs, Clark examined the formal properties of the painting in relation to Courbet's sources. In the fourth paragraph, he placed particular emphasis on the artist's intentions, maintaining that Courbet had exerted a high degree of control in order to unify such 'disparate materials'. Clark described the picture in some detail, but only to support his analysis of its underlying structure; indeed, his method of approach is entirely consistent with the observation at the start of the fourth paragraph that, in the 'Burial at Ornans', '... structure is what counts, not detail'.

In the seventh through to the tenth paragraphs, Clark returned to the problem of interpretation. His comments focused on the sense of dissociation between the event and its portrayal, as noted in his opening paragraph, but this time he raised several questions about the work's meaning, which he directed to specific points arising from the intervening analysis of paragraphs two to six. For instance, his earlier reference to the dramatic neutrality of the picture is made more explicit by pointing out that the composition lacks a focal point; that the attention of the figures is drawn in all directions, least of all to the priest and the open grave. He further pointed out that, with one exception, 'There is no exchange of gaze or glance' between the participants and that their facial expressions are, for the most part, devoid of emotion (9th para.). Furthermore, he noted that the formal arrangement of the painting effectively avoids dramatic emphasis by an even treatment and distribution of the figures.

'Burial at Ornans', along with Courbet's two other major works of the same period, the 'Stonebreakers' and the 'Peasants of Flagey', both perplexed and angered the critics and public who attended the Paris Salon of 1851. According to Clark, it was the deadpan quality of the picture, '... precisely its lack of open declared significance which offended most of all' (10th para., emphasis in orig.). Beyond this point in his argument, Clark investigated the nature of that elusive significance in the light of the complex political ethos of French provincial society in 1848-1851, and of Courbet's and his family's position within it. Detailed historical evidence was thus brought to bear on the problems of interpretation and interposed with evidence gleaned from the formal analysis. The resulting appraisal sensitively resolves many of the difficulties presented by this period of Courbet's work.

Further summary of Clark's assessment of the 'Burial at Ornans' is unnecessary; suffice to say that it supplies an illuminating example of Argumentative Aesthetic Criticism and serves to highlight the main features of such criticism. As noted earlier, it is characteristically pervaded with a concern for evaluation. In Clark's assessment, however, there is no specific 'stage' in which he offers a judgement of the work: rather, his whole endeavour is animated by the belief that Courbet's work merits the highest level of interest and investigation. The very context and parameters of his enquiry imply as much. Approbatory comments break through in only one or two places: in the sixth paragraph, Clark concluded his analysis by stating that, in contrast to the relative straightforwardness of his

source material, Courbet's work is '... carefully and subtly constructed' and reveals evidence of '... what kind of intelligence has been at work'. Thus, he concluded that the subtlety, complexity, and equivocation of the 'Burial at Ornans' marks it out as a painting of outstanding artistic merit.

The relationship in Clark's criticism between description, analysis, and interpretation is particularly illuminating. As already noted, the excerpt begins with an identification of the major difficulty for interpretation, proceeds to an analysis of the way in which the details of the picture are structured, and then concludes by raising again, more explicitly, the question of interpretation. The logical relationship between the different 'stages' of criticism seems to hold true despite fluctuations either in the order in which they occur, or in the relative importance assigned to each one. Clark's observation concerning the 'Burial at Ornans', that '... structure is what counts, not detail' (4th para.), implies the opposite notion that some artworks emphasise detail and have a less obvious sense of formal structure: for example, the paintings of Gustav Klimt. The principle to be drawn from this comparison is that different artworks call for corresponding differences in critical emphasis: with some works it is appropriate to attend more to description than to formal analysis, with others the converse holds true.

Clark's criticism of the 'Burial at Ornans' also highlights the relationship between formal analysis and interpretation. Elsewhere (ibid., p. 11) he suggested that the language of formal analysis is

subtly value-laden in a way which belies its appearance of objectivity. Smith (1968, p.415) has also noted the tendency of analytical statements to 'shade over' into the interpretive phase. Hence, statements which attempt to describe the interrelations of elements within a work (e.g., 'unified', 'balanced', 'dissociated'), and statements which characterize the work's aesthetic qualities (e.g., 'bizarre', 'solemn', 'vibrant') are partly constitutive of its meaning. In this sense, analytical statements can be said to be normative in character because they both anticipate the interpretive stage and provide pointers to the critic's eventual appraisal of the worth and significance of the artwork.

Smith has maintained that the task of criticism involves a gradual separation of subject matter and content in the artwork. Description attends initially to the overt surface meaning, that is, the subject matter of the work; analysis, as it shades into interpretation, searches beneath the work's surface for its underlying content. In a passage which could well be applied to the 'Burial at Ornans' and to Clark's assessment of it, he observed that:

Content ... is a kind of distillation, abstraction, or compaction of whatever is depicted or portrayed. And often it is in the more significant works that striking discrepancies are found between what the work ostensibly represents and what it is interpreted to be, or what it is said to be a metaphor or image of. (p.416).

In summary, a broad distinction can be made between private and public modes of criticism, that is, between exploratory and argumentative approaches to understanding the artwork, respectively. The distinct



'operations', 'stages', or 'phases' which are common to all forms of criticism bear a logical relationship to each other. The relationship is also a causal one. Formal analysis presupposes description: it cannot take place at all except on the basis of some degree of observation, even if this amounts to only a cursory scan of the visual 'facts'. Similarly, the interpretive phase of criticism presupposes the phases of description and analysis, however scant, biased, or incomplete these may be: simply to ask 'What does the work mean?' implies the observation of at least some details and the recognition that those details are related in such a way as to present a problem.

In practice, however, the critic does not follow this procedure, at least not in a rigid, self-conscious manner: formal analysis is not usually delayed until all the features of an artwork have been observed and classified; indeed, the very act of classifying assumes that sets of relationships exist within the work. In this respect, the term 'inventory', which is sometimes used for the descriptive stage, is a little misleading (Feldman, 1972, p.467; Mittler, 1973, p.19): the listing of descriptive features is not arbitrary; instead, a nascent form of analysis takes place, in which sub-lists of such features are differentiated within the artwork. In the process of Exploratory Aesthetic Criticism, the viewer moves through the critical 'stages' in an oscillatory rather than a linear or strictly sequential fashion. The degree to which this oscillation takes place varies according to the viewer, the artwork, and the conditions under which the work is perceived. For some viewers, the range of critical options may narrow all too quickly; for others, the descriptive and analytical stages may be passed over altogether (that is, as far as

the viewers are aware). This process (Exploratory Aesthetic Criticism), and the logical relationship between the mental operations involved, is brought into sharper focus as the critic, acting in his or her professional capacity, then makes public a personal appraisal of the work (Argumentative Aesthetic Criticism).

It is suggested, therefore, that the differences which MacGregor detected between the theories of art educators such as Feldman and Smith are resolved by holding in mind Smith's distinction between exploratory and argumentative modes of criticism. Their separate accounts of critical activity are best understood as providing complementary approaches to teaching art criticism.

#### 3.4.3 The Relevance for Art Education of Aestheticians' Views On Criticism

As a consequence of analyzing art education theorists' views on criticism, MacGregor (op. cit., Chap. II) concluded that such views were inadequate because they amounted to generalised notions about the nature of critical response and thus fell short of formulating strategies for teaching different approaches to criticism. Hence, in Chapter III, she sought to identify a range of approaches by means of a further analysis of critical concepts located in the writings of aestheticians, namely, Sibley (1959), Stevenson (1950), and Weitz (1972).

Her choice of aestheticians was guided by the criteria of 'coherence', 'relevance', and 'variety' (p.34f.). To achieve 'coherence' she chose 'ordinary-language philosophers' rather than writers from Continental

traditions such as phenomenology and hermeneutics. She considered her choice to have 'relevance' because she thought that her aim of extending the critical vocabulary of trainee art teachers would be best served by philosophers who derived their theories of criticism from the analysis of language. She believed her choice to represent 'variety' because it demonstrated the coexistence of radically different standpoints within analytical philosophy.

For present purposes, brief comments on MacGregor's comparison of the views of Sibley and Stevenson are sufficient to show the kind of direct link she was seeking to make between aestheticians' theories of criticism and critical studies in art education. Sibley's main concern was said to be with analyzing the types of remarks made about artworks. He defined aesthetic terms as consisting partly of words which are unequivocally aesthetic in character and partly of words which are nonaesthetic in origin but have been recruited for aesthetic purposes, for example, metaphorical and quasi-metaphorical terms like 'dynamic', 'melancholy', 'balanced', etc. Sibley examined the different ways in which critics use the terminology of criticism and suggested that, in order to develop learners' responsiveness to art, teaching strategies should be modelled on the structure of critical language. He further suggested that nonaesthetic terms be used to direct learners' attention to the literal features of artworks. Nonaesthetic terms could also serve to point out aesthetic features. Learners might then be encouraged to communicate their responses to formal qualities by requiring them to employ simple metaphors, thus enabling them to transfer terms in everyday usage in order to talk about art. This ability could then be extended to include the mastery

of metaphorical terms more usually associated with a specialist knowledge of art theory and the history of art.

Stevenson's main point of focus was said to be the persuasive function of professional criticism. Unlike the lay critic, the professional is able to draw on a rich fund of knowledge and experience of alternative critical strategies in order to make a 'decision' about how a particular work is to be perceived. Stevenson considered this decision to be crucial because it subsequently channels the critic's perceptions in a particular direction, leading him or her to emphasise certain aspects of the work and to play down others. In the professional capacity of a persuader, the critic's private decision about how to view the work becomes a public 'imperative' which points the reader along the same path. Statements which the critic subsequently makes about the work's properties serve to support to his or her initial 'decision'.

MacGregor considered that Stevenson's conception of critical performance implies a different set of strategies for teaching than that of Sibley. Rather than stressing the mastery of critical language by means of a progression from simple to complex terminology, the teacher would encourage learners to work deductively; this would entail first the generating of hypotheses about how a work was to be viewed and then the 'testing' of those hypotheses on the basis of observed properties in the artwork.

An obvious point that can be made about Sibley and Stevenson is that the difference in their positions is the same as that detected in

Chapter 2.3.1 above, with regard to Feldman and Smith. Sibley, with his emphasis on building vocabulary through close observation of the artwork, can be said to be dealing with Exploratory Aesthetic Criticism (Smith, op. cit., p.39), that is, the development of aesthetic perception through an interplay of increasingly sophisticated language and observational skills. Stevenson, on the other hand, concentrates his attention more on the model of skilled performance; he therefore concerns himself with the activities of the seasoned critic who, by means of Argumentative Aesthetic Criticism (ibid.), brings all his or her powers to bear on the task of persuading others to accept a personal viewpoint.

MacGregor's insistence that the aestheticians selected for her study 'propose alternatives, not variations, about how critics use critical language' (p.37) is open to challenge; it is, however, more important to reflect on the use she has made of the aestheticians' (putatively) distinct approaches to criticism. Principally, she incorporated the three approaches in a 'unit of instruction' (Chap. IV) with a view to developing the ability of trainee art teachers to engage in critical discourse. A 'trial study' (Chap. V) was conducted, in which an experimental group were first taught about the aestheticians' theories and then 'tested' regarding the ability to apply each approach in appraising selected artworks. MacGregor finally presented evidence to show that the participants not only improved their grasp of critical terminology but also developed a greater awareness of alternative critical strategies and the theories that lie beneath them (Chap.VI).

The question of linking aesthetic theory and the teaching of critical method has also been explored by the American art educator Chapman (1978, pp.80-90) in a study of alternative approaches to general art teaching, in which she listed four 'methods of criticizing art ... Inductive, Deductive, Empathic, and Interactive' and discussed the pedagogical implications of each one with reference to a single 'artwork', the architect Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Kaufmann House'. Chapman's position affords an interesting comparison, for, whilst MacGregor's study is an attempt to introduce trainee teachers to a range of approaches to criticism within the parameters of analytical philosophy, Chapman's is an attempt to introduce teachers to a comprehensive range of critical approaches. A comparison of the approaches identified by these two theorists reveals some points of similarity. For example, the emphasis in Stevenson's viewpoint on the critic's initial 'decision' and its determinative effect on interpretation can be readily aligned with the procedure of Chapman's 'deductive method', the stages of which are listed as follows:

1. Decide on the criteria you will use.
2. Examine the work to identify evidence that specific features do or do not meet the criteria.
3. Decide on the degree to which the criteria have been met.  
(p.83).

Some similarity can also be detected between the emphasis in Sibley's viewpoint on the learner's need to acquire critical vocabulary and Chapman's description of the 'empathic method' as the use of '... analogies and metaphors to relate what you see to what you feel' (ibid., p.85).

However, it is thought that this alignment of the views of individual aestheticians with 'orientations' in aesthetic theory is only partly successful, because the former cannot be fully representative of positions which, characteristically, are distillations of theory involving, with varying degrees of relevance, the views of any number of theorists. The chief difference between MacGregor's basis of critical pluralism and that of Chapman is thus one of scope: the former facilitates in-depth study but sacrifices breadth of treatment, whereas the latter encompasses a wider range of critical options but does not allow for an intensive investigation of artworks with reference to the approaches of particular theorists.

An implication which arises from comparing MacGregor's and Chapman's positions is that critical studies in art education would be enhanced by developing curricula which incorporated a range of approaches drawn from both individual theorists and 'schools' of theorists. The former would highlight the importance of the personal viewpoint, the latter would help to facilitate a theoretical grasp of criticism as a whole field.

### 3.5 Metacriticism in Recent Art Education Theorizing

Most of the art education texts examined in the preceding sections are a little dated, but the central issues they raise have continuing relevance and, in general terms, have not been superseded. Nevertheless, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, a new wave of interest in criticism and metacriticism has emerged since the mid-1980s in connection with the Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) 'movement' in the U.S.A. Certain editions of key journals have been

devoted to DBAE issues (Studies in Art Educ., Summer, 1987; Art Educ., Sept. 1987, March 1988), including the relevance of philosophical aesthetics for the development of content and methods of art teaching. Principally, DBAE, as promulgated by the Getty Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts, represents an attempt to promote the educational value of art by systematizing the content and processes of art education with reference to the 'four parent disciplines of art,' namely, aesthetics, studio production, art history, and art criticism (Greer, 1984, p.213f). Moreover, DBAE involves the development of a detailed programme, in which the characteristics of art and art learning are systematically aligned with aspects of general curriculum theory regarding sequence, pedagogical method and the developmental capacities of learners. Predictably, critics of DBAE have warned of a possible tendency towards standardisation and uniformity (e.g., Hamblen, 1987).

The status of philosophical aesthetics within the fourfold scheme of DBAE (art production, art history, art criticism, aesthetics) has been challenged on the grounds that it is fundamental to the other three components and thus hardly justifies separate treatment (Gray, 1987). Moreover, its inclusion as a distinct focus has been described as probably unworkable in view of the complex philosophy it involves, the preponderance of poor quality aesthetics in philosophical writings, and the difficulty of educating arts teachers to grasp philosophical content and methods (Redfern, 1988). Some level of training in general philosophy is said to be necessary if arts teachers are to teach 'aesthetics' adequately. However, the level of such training depends on the kind of approach to teaching aesthetics that is



envisaged. Hamblen (1988) has identified four such approaches, namely, (i) Historical Philosophical Aesthetics, which involves studying the history of ideas in aesthetics with reference to individual theorists and groups of theorists; (ii) Aesthetic Perception and Experience, in which stress is placed on the 'activity' of experiencing 'the aesthetic in art' (p.83), that is, by seeking to deepen learners' understanding of problems as these arise in situations of live criticism; (iii) Aesthetic Inquiry, which '...focuses on the rationalistic and logical examination of statements about art' (p.86); and (iv) Aesthetics for Critical Social Consciousness, in which critical statements are not merely examined from a logical or rationalistic standpoint, but are viewed in '...relationship to their larger social consciousness shaping implications' (p.87).

Hamblen's identification of approaches to teaching aesthetics raises the question of whether or not a systematic grounding in philosophy is a necessary prerequisite for understanding the controversial aspects of aesthetics, or indeed any discipline (cf. Eaton, 1984). Systematic instruction is certainly needed for Historical Philosophical Aesthetics (see (i) above), but, in varying degrees, it seems less appropriate to the other approaches. In Hamblen's view, the 'actual ambiguities' or 'contested concepts' of aesthetics should not be deferred by teachers until learners reach an advanced level of philosophical understanding; rather, they should be treated as foci for direct engagements with central conceptual problems. Hence, the capacity for thinking philosophically is to be learned in response to problem situations in criticism. In this connection, Hagaman (1988)

has reported the success of a project aimed at introducing philosophical aesthetics to art teachers through the use of 'puzzle cases' involving examples of artworks, critical extracts, and/or fictional 'situations' which encapsulate fundamental problems in intriguing ways (cf. Battin, 1986; Battin, Fisher, Moore, & Silvers, 1989). This issue-centred approach represents a dynamic view of philosophical aesthetics in which enquiry is not 'theory driven' but 'driven to theory' by confrontation with controversial content (ibid., p.14).

The issue-centred approach to teaching aesthetics advocated by Hamblen (and others) represents a vital alternative to those of teaching from one critical standpoint, or teaching about a range of stances, or perhaps presenting a potted history of ideas in aesthetics. It does not depend on a prior level of sophistication and training of the participants; instead, it draws upon the incipient philosophical reasoning of which, according to Ecker (1973), even young pupils are capable. In essence, an issue-centred approach to teaching aesthetics is comparable with established strategies used for the teaching of moral or ethical problems in which a 'reflective equilibrium' is sought between '... theoretical claims and judgements in specific concrete cases', (Battin, op. cit., p.14).

Nevertheless, an approach in which learners are 'driven to theory' through an engagement with philosophically puzzling cases is not an easy option for the art teacher. Unless the teacher has a reasonably sound grasp of the theoretical field of aesthetics, and of significant points of divergence within it, he or she will be unable to capitalise

on the didactic opportunities likely to arise from the freewheeling speculations of classroom discussion.

A major source of theoretical divergence, largely overlooked in DBAE writings, is the fundamental clash between Anglo-American aesthetics and the Continental and Continentally-inspired tradition(s) of phenomenology, hermeneutics, Marxism, deconstruction, etc. It will be recalled that MacGregor (op. cit. p.34f.) deliberately avoided Continental theorists when choosing aestheticians for her research because she judged that Continental and analytical aesthetics were, conceptually, too dissimilar to permit meaningful methodological comparisons. Kaelin (1990) recently expressed the opposite view that phenomenological methods of criticism can be successfully combined with 'ordinary-language' methods within the same programme of instruction. Moreover, Anderson (1991, p.17) suggested that the dominance of analytical aesthetics has been challenged by Continental thinking to such an extent over recent years that the case for a comprehensive combination of methods in teaching aesthetic criticism is inescapable. In this connection, however, the gap between theory and practice remains wide, even in the U.S.A. Whilst Dorn (1990, p.26) may claim, though perhaps with some exaggeration, that '... the dominant art education theory of our time has become the pursuit of metacriticism,' Hamblen (1991, p.20) has pointed out that the teaching of critical methods in American schools is still dominated by '... the art criticism format and its specific steps,' as exemplified by Feldman's 'critical performance' and Broudy's 'aesthetic scanning.' This falls a long way short of achieving a pedagogy of metacriticism.

As a consequence of analysing recent art education texts in this section, the conclusion is reached that there is a need to develop a strategy for teaching the criticism of divergent concepts and methods of criticism (or metacriticism) that (i) combines analytical and Continental traditions of philosophical aesthetics, and (ii) aligns the essentially problematic content of aesthetics with a compatible theory of instruction.

### 3.6 Summary

The aims of this analytical review of art education theory and practice were as follows: (i) to identify concepts and methods associated with the teaching of critical diversity; and (ii) to explore the relationship between theories of criticism generated by aestheticians and those that art education theorists have derived from aesthetics.

The review has led to the identification of different ways in which competing views on the nature of criticism can be categorized for educational purposes. The distinctions between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' approaches to art scholarship (Chap. 3.2 above), and between 'exploratory' and 'argumentative' types of criticism (Chap. 3.4 above) have proved to be especially pertinent: the former because it underlines the importance of linking theories concerning the nature of artworks with compatible methods of criticism; the latter because it highlights the difference between the private and public functioning of all critics. Moreover, certain implications regarding the status of aesthetics as a component of art teaching programmes have been explored. It is posited that a systematic training in

general philosophy is not essential for a competent engagement in metacritical enquiry on the part of teachers and learners; rather, the broad cultural base of aesthetics, which is reflected in recent art education texts, particularly connected with DBAE, necessitates an eclectic stance towards a range of contributing disciplines. The intellectual skills which this implies need to be first elaborated and then implemented as part of an overall strategy for teaching criticism/metacriticism in the U.K.

Two issues in particular have arisen which, on reflection, appear to necessitate a revision, or rather refinement, of the research problem identified in Chapter 1.

First, the analysis of MacGregor's (op. cit.) doctoral study has highlighted the importance of modelling the teaching of critical methods on the theories of aestheticians. However, in the light of observations made earlier concerning the growing impact of 'extrinsic' approaches on art scholarship over the past two decades and the recent influence of DBAE-inspired writings, it is suggested that MacGregor's basis for developing a programme of critical pluralism should be extended to include theories of not only 'ordinary language philosophers,' but others in the analytical tradition, as well as Continental (and Continentally-inspired) thinkers.

Second, the analytical review as a whole has found little evidence of attempts by art educators to seek alignments between aesthetic theory and instructional theory. Hence, the writers referred to in this chapter are of no direct help as far as the problem of how to present

the multi-dimensionality of criticism to learners by means of a coherent pedagogical strategy. However, as a consequence of reflecting on their contributions, a pedagogy of metacriticism is thought to depend on achieving compatibility between the working strategies of critics (as defined by aestheticians) and critical strategies for use in the classroom. Given the stated aim of this enquiry to explore the pedagogical implications of controversy in aesthetics, this will entail not merely the alignment of particular stances on criticism with theories of instruction, but the alignment of a broad spectrum of divergent stances with an overarching theory of instruction, namely, one which focuses on the contestability, not just the plurality, of criticism. What is needed is a rationale for teaching about controversy which can be directly applied to the teaching of aesthetics and criticism in art education.

In this chapter, a range of concepts and methods of art criticism have been considered. The purpose of the following chapter will be to examine more closely the philosophical theories underlying different conceptions of criticism on the assumption that controversy in aesthetics is a manifestation of controversy on a more fundamental philosophical level. It is further assumed that this examination is an essential prerequisite for developing a pedagogy of metacriticism that successfully combines the insights of divergent traditions in philosophical aesthetics.

## CHAPTER 4

### STANDARD OPPOSITIONS OF PHILOSOPHY AND AESTHETICS

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was concluded that art education theorists had not fully appreciated the link between metacriticism and controversy in aesthetics; or rather, had not explored the ramifications of that link as a coherent educational policy (Chap.3.4). Metacriticism is the activity of judging between competing critical claims in respect of particular artworks. It entails some degree of philosophical enquiry into the normative principles underlying such claims. There is, though, a subtle distinction between metacriticism and metatheory (Ecker, 1973, pp.70-71) which depends on whether the enquirer's purpose is to evaluate critical disputes or to explore underlying theoretical issues for their philosophical interest. For present purposes, metacriticism is the more appropriate term because it reflects this researcher's motive for exploring philosophical aesthetics, namely, to clarify conceptual issues with a view to illuminating and possibly reforming art education theory and practice in the analytical/critical domain. Hence, the term metacriticism is being used in an exclusive sense in an attempt to strike a balance between the special concerns of art criticism and those of philosophical aesthetics. Probably the best criticism is grounded in some understanding of the conceptual issues raised by critical practice; conversely, the best theorizing in

aesthetics is that which explores the implications of such issues in the context of actual criticism.

The present enquiry has not arisen directly in the context of this researcher's teaching and cannot therefore be described as field-generated; nevertheless, it has important links with the kinds of 'first-order' interpretive puzzles regarding the nature and limits of the artwork which emerged in an earlier study of irony in the visual arts (Rawding, 1984). In recognition of the danger of over-theorizing and a possible charge of educational irrelevance (Ecker & Kaelin, 1972, p.282), actual examples of artworks and issues connected with interpreting and evaluating them in the school art class will be considered in some detail later (see Chaps. 6 & 8).

#### 4.2 Research Sources and Criteria for Choosing Them

Criteria for choosing source texts for the present enquiry into philosophical aesthetics may be identified as follows. (i) Comprehensiveness: sources will be critical commentaries or surveys rather than seminal works; (ii) Relevance: they will include consideration of the recent impact of Continental thought on aesthetics, branches of philosophy other than aesthetics, and related cultural disciplines; (iii) Accessibility: they will be works by Anglo-American authors which attempt to elucidate the unfamiliar discourse of Continental thought from the standpoint of the analytical tradition; Controversiality: they will be characterized by an emphasis on discussing the standard oppositions of philosophical theory with reference to the links between theoretical frameworks, 'schools' of theory, and the conceptual issues which engender disputes.



First, it is thought likely that this enquiry will be best served by analysing texts that provide a historical overview of problems in contemporary aesthetics and in philosophy generally. This means seeking reliable guides to theories of seminal philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein rather than attempting to consult such sources directly. There is a danger that ideas gained second-hand may, by the time they are filtered yet again, be rendered less than reliable. This danger can be minimised, however, by comparing and cross-referencing several sources with a view to identifying common terminology in which recurrent problems are stated and considering the kinds of explanations or solutions offered with regard to such problems.

A particularly important consideration influencing the choice of texts is that they should not be limited to the field of philosophical aesthetics. Fundamental issues concerning the nature or being of artworks and the interpretive activity of percipients also invite comparison with studies in other branches of philosophy, such as philosophy of mind, (Shiner, 1982), philosophy of language (Geahigan, 1983), and philosophy of science (Margolis, 1980b). Hence, it is necessary to choose texts which attempt to elucidate the main ideas of Continental thought by stressing points of both similarity and dissimilarity with the more familiar discourse (i.e., for British art educators) of analytical philosophy.

A further consideration rests on the earlier finding that the broad tradition of Continental philosophy has begun to make an impact on (art) education research (Chap. 2.6.2) and the discipline of the

history of art (Chap. 3.2.1), as well as influencing a range of related disciplines such as literature studies, sociology, psychology, and anthropology. The task of communicating the ideas of Continental philosophers to a British audience faces the potential problem of overcoming resistance to what is a novel and largely inaccessible style of discourse. For whilst the works of writers such as Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty, and Dufrenne are gaining an audience amongst art educators in the U.S.A. and Canada, there is little evidence of similar progress in the U.K. (Mason, 1982; Lankford, 1984; Webb, 1987).

Several key texts which meet the above criteria will be referred to at some length (Margolis, 1980a, 1980b; Rorty, 1980; Bernstein, 1983). These can be viewed as functioning as primary sources. Other texts will also be cited, notably, Palmer (1969) and Spiegelberg (1971) on the leading themes of Continental philosophy, Walker (1984) on the impact of such themes on British philosophy as a whole, and Giddens (1976) on their implications for sociology.

#### 4.3 The Intrinsic/Extrinsic Distinction in Aesthetics with Reference to Meta-philosophical Controversy

The enquiry in this chapter is an attempt to explore links between controversy at the level of art critical disputes and controversy at the level of aesthetic theory. A major focus encompassing both practical criticism and philosophy of criticism has been identified, namely, that concerning the aesthetic relevance of 'external influences on the artist' (Hospers, op. cit., cf. Chap.1.1 above). This issue concerns whether or not, or to what extent, so-called

external influences are 'part' of the artwork. On the one hand, there are theorists of art and criticism who make a clear distinction between what is intrinsic and what extrinsic to the artwork, and, on the other, are those whose view of the production and reception of art leads them to blur or negate any such distinction (ibid.).

The intrinsic/extrinsic distinction in contemporary aesthetics will be examined with reference to standard oppositions<sup>1</sup> in philosophy because it is representative of fundamental controversy (Chap. 1.1). This research enquiry is grounded on the assumption that aesthetics, equally with the history, criticism and production of art, is an essential element of the discipline 'art.' Hence, it is also assumed that whatever is fundamentally important to this discipline should be made a central feature of the way it is taught and that the ramifications of the content specified ought also to be worked out in a manner consistent with theoretical considerations concerning the level and sequence of curriculum content.

#### 4.3.1 Analytical and Continental: Opposing Traditions?

A helpful starting point in this regard is Walker's (1984) topical journalistic review of the state of British philosophy: first, because his account of the intellectual perturbations of the post-war period was written for a lay (i.e., non-philosophical) audience and is thus relatively easy to grasp; second, because his comments on the impact of Continental thinkers on Anglo-American analytical philosophy reveals a polarisation between (mainly American) philosophers in the analytical tradition who are broadly sympathetic with the central preoccupations of Continental thought, and those (mainly British)

philosophers who have remained resistant toward such influence. Walker observed that where analytical philosophers had reached conclusions similar to those of Continental thinkers, they had done so independently within their own intellectual tradition.

This point is confirmed by the American philosopher Margolis's (1980b) analysis of contemporary aesthetics. Like Walker, he has recognized that though analytical and Continental traditions of thought have developed independently, the emergence in both traditions of a philosophical interest in the 'intentional' strongly suggests the need for a 'rapprochement' (p.4). In this connection, he has detected a distinction within analytical aesthetics of '... two entirely opposed strands of work,' namely, between a dominant '... empiricist, sensory-centered (sic), perceptually restricted orientation' (p.3) and a recent trend, in line with his own sympathies, according to which '... artworks possess attributes essential to their ontic analysis and aesthetic appreciation that are not themselves perceptually accessible' (p.4). Hence, it appears simplistic to describe the major opposition of aesthetic theory as that between analytical and Continental traditions; more accurately, according to Margolis, it is an opposition between empiricism, foundationalism and methodological reductionism on the one hand, and pragmatism, historicism and non-reductive materialism on the other (pp.3-7).

An implication of Margolis's analysis of aesthetic theory is that the idea of 'standard oppositions' ought to be considered on two levels. First with reference to philosophical 'traditions,' 'paradigms,' or 'schools' of thought (in this enquiry the less ambiguous term

'theoretical frameworks' will be used); second, with reference to the conceptual characteristics of the different frameworks, generally expressed in the philosophical literature by technical terms such as historicism, realism, relativism, etc. But what do such terms mean and what is their significance for art education? In answering these questions, it is necessary to examine their use both in aesthetics and philosophy as a whole. Margolis's declared aim of linking problems in the philosophy of art with wider concerns (ibid., p.3) suggests that his analysis of 'oppositions' in aesthetics can profitably be compared with the analyses of philosophers who, like him, believe in the value of Continental philosophy, but whose focus of concern lies beyond the realm of aesthetics.

For example, the American philosopher Bernstein (1983, p.7f.), has spoken of a '... long-standing divide between the Continental and English-language traditions.' However, he has also insisted that '... the central cultural opposition of our time' is between 'objectivism' and 'relativism.' This is not to suggest that in his discussion of the oppositional nature of philosophy Bernstein makes a simple correspondence of the 'English-language' traditions(s) with objectivism and the Continental tradition(s) with relativism; on the contrary, his discussion is sophisticated and, like that of Margolis, reveals analytical philosophy in particular to be comprised of a range of positions between these extremes. Once more, though, the distinction between theoretical frameworks ('Continental and English-language traditions') and conceptual characteristics ('objectivism and relativism') is prominent.

Similarly, the American philosopher Rorty (1980, p.341f.) has referred to a '... distinction between epistemology and hermeneutics' within philosophy. The former is used by him as an umbrella term for mainstream analytical philosophy which, prior to the impact of Wittgenstein's later work, is said to have been largely characterized by a '... quest for certainty, structure, and rigor (sic) and from the attempt to constitute itself a tribunal of reason' (p.166). According to Rorty, this quest was motivated by the conviction that philosophy is '... an architectonic and encompassing discipline' (p.266) that is capable of providing theoretical guidance and sustenance to the whole realm of human knowledge. This view of the purpose of philosophy presupposed that empirical and rational enquiry could ultimately achieve a scheme of representation that would accurately mirror reality. On the other hand, Rorty's use of the term 'hermeneutics' is not limited to 'interpretation theory' (cf. Palmer, 1969), but incorporates all varieties of Continental and Continentally-inspired theorizing (phenomenological, existentialist, semiotic, Marxist, etc.). These philosophies are profoundly historicist (Rorty, op. cit., pp.166-168) in that they reject the positivist assumption that knowledge can be eternalised or conceived separately from the socio-historical conditions that brought it into being. They are also implicitly or explicitly critical of the subject/object and fact/value distinctions that typify mainstream philosophy and they espouse a pragmatic as opposed to an essentialist view of language.

Moreover, Rorty has included under the rubric of 'hermeneutic' the work of analytical philosophers in the post-Wittgensteinian tradition, who by their insistence on the validity of '... an infinity of ways of

knowing' (p.367) have questioned whether it is legitimate to go on characterising philosophy as a battleground of competing views. Such theorists are said to have argued for a realignment of the fundamental purpose of philosophy away from the pursuit of ineluctable truth through 'confrontation' towards a new emphasis on the contribution it can make to what Oakeshott has called the continuing 'conversation of Mankind' (ibid., p.389f.), the implication being that philosophy no longer has special status as a foundational discipline.

All three philosophers (Margolis, Bernstein, Rorty) consider aspects of theory drawn from both analytical and Continental 'traditions.' They each discuss the oppositional nature of contemporary philosophy, although they use different terminology. In the process, they challenge a rather standard assumption that 'analytical' and 'Continental' refer to incompatible discourses which, for example, cannot be included in the same curriculum programme (see MacGregor, 1971, p.34f.). On the contrary, such terms denote broad, historically independent traditions which, in recent decades and over certain aspects of theory, have nevertheless shown important points of convergence. Hence, it would be misguided to draw too close a parallel between the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction in aesthetics and the distinction between analytical and Continental conceptions of the ontology of art. The situation is far more complicated than this. First, because the opposition these philosophers have identified (which cuts across the supposed analytical/Continental divide) is less a 'hard and fast' distinction than a heuristic fixing of extremes posited on the understanding that 'true' positions are adjacent to them. A second and more important consideration is that they each

appear to advocate a 'third way' or alternative to the largely confrontational state of their discipline.

An implication that arises from these writers' analyses is that art educators who wish to teach about different stances in aesthetics and criticism ought to take account of how these stances relate to major orientations in contemporary philosophy as a whole. Analytical and Continental traditions represent a major divergence of viewpoints at the meta-philosophical level and the differences between them ought to form a part of any such teaching programme. However, in order to gain a more complete picture of the theoretical scene, it is also necessary to take account of recent developments within analytical philosophy that have proved congenial to certain central themes of Continental theorizing. This implies that though the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction is a key focus for identifying different stances in aesthetics and criticism, it needs to be carefully qualified if its full pedagogical potential is to be realised. To the best of this researcher's knowledge, no attempt has yet been made to trace these various theoretical connections with a view to discussing their relevance for art education theory and practice in the U.K.

#### 4.4 Distinctions between Theoretical Frameworks with Reference to Conceptual Characteristics

Given that 'analytical' and 'Continental' are not wholly incompatible discourses, certain questions need to be asked: What are the major differences between them? At which points of theory can they be said to converge? What are the implications of the various theoretical stances for the teaching of art criticism? In seeking answers to



these questions it is necessary to examine more closely the conceptual characteristics of the theoretical frameworks. Two in particular -- reductionism and relativism -- occur repeatedly in the primary source texts and will be commented upon in some detail below.

#### 4.4.1 Empiricism in Aesthetics and the Problem of Reduction

Continental and mainstream analytical philosophy differ because of their separate provenances: historical, geographical, and language factors have ensured their largely independent developments until quite recently. But is this all that separates these discourses? At first glance, it would appear so; for as the French philosopher Ricoeur (Chamberlin, 1974) has observed, the Continental tradition of

... phenomenology continues the transcendental of Kant, the originary (sic) of Hume, and the doubt and cogito of Descartes. In no way does it represent a sharp mutation in philosophy. (p.126).

Likewise, Rorty (op. cit.) has insisted that

... the difference between 'analytic' and other sorts of philosophy is relatively unimportant -- a matter of style and tradition rather than a difference of 'method' or of first principles. (p.8).

And, in the context of aesthetics, Margolis (1980b) has contrasted '... the spare style and mode of explication favored (sic) in the analytic' with the philosophically 'florid' style of '... the Continental traditions' (p.5, emphasis added).

These citations imply that Walker's comment on the resistance of British analytical philosophers to all shades of Continental thought as '... a confrontation of two intellectual traditions' (op. cit.,

emphasis added), can be understood as referring to a philosophical conservatism rather than a fundamental disagreement about the nature and purpose of philosophical enquiry. Nevertheless, how far is it justifiable to describe the difference between analytic and Continental aesthetics as a matter of style rather than substance? Margolis's (and Rorty's) charge that mainstream analytic philosophy encourages a reductionist view of the world, in contrast to the expansive, 'florid' tendency of Continental thought, appears to indicate a substantive divergence at the level of 'first principles' with important implications for method both in professional criticism and the teaching of criticism in the classroom. According to Margolis, the reductionist tendency in what he has called the 'empiricist strain' of analytic aesthetics results in '... strangely thin ontologies' (ibid., p.6) of the artwork. Empiricists, so-called, would see things rather differently: they would surely maintain that the purpose of art criticism is to avoid all (putatively) idiosyncratic or contingent factors in order to arrive at what is deemed essential or universally valid. The 'reduction' that such criticism entails would thus be viewed as more a matter of distilling information than disregarding it.

Phenomenology is also 'empirical' in that it emphasizes the importance of a direct experience of phenomena; it places a high premium on investigating the uniqueness of lived experience and encourages a responsive rather than a manipulative approach to objective reality, requiring an experiential openness toward persons and events as well as objects such as artworks. Accordingly, phenomenology attacks what it sees as the '... spurious narrowing imposed by the model of the

natural sciences' (Gadamer quoted by Bernstein, op. cit., p.39) and instead lays stress on preserving the authenticity of phenomena, thereby ensuring a '... fuller and fairer hearing than traditional empiricism has accorded them' (Spiegelberg, 1971. p.656). This involves a

... determined effort to undo the effects of habitual patterns of thought and ... is perhaps the most teachable part of the phenomenological method. (ibid.).

Spiegelberg's observation provides an important clue to the kind of strategies for teaching metacriticism that might arise from an analysis of theoretical frameworks. A critic's description of an artwork is shaped by his or her expectations of what is there to be seen: different sets of expectations lead to different descriptions. The 'thin' descriptions of the 'empiricist strain' (Margolis, op. cit., p.6) of analytical aesthetics are not just lacking in detail, they are also qualitatively misleading. By contrast, the non-reductive empiricism of phenomenology forces the interpreter to avoid '... rushing into description before having made sure of the thing to be described' (Spiegelberg, op. cit., p.672); it does so by drawing attention to the 'pre-predicative experience' (ibid.) on which description is based. What this might mean for teaching metacriticism can only be speculated upon at this point. At the very least, it would seem to entail challenging the confidence of learners regarding critical objectivity by demonstrating the inescapably interpretive character of even the most straightforward description. It would then be possible to apply the same principle to actual experiences of criticism in which ostensibly 'pure' descriptions of complex works can be rendered problematic.

As Barrett (1985) has demonstrated, an apparently bland photograph of Parisian cafe life can be 'used' in a variety of media contexts to convey a range of conflicting meanings, none of which are self-evidently the result of describing 'what is there.' When faced with vastly more difficult works, such as Courbet's 'Burial at Ornans' (see above, Chap. 3.4.2) the idea of straightforward description is seen to be even less tenable. The emphasis in empiricism on 'essential' meaning seems to shift critical attention away from key qualities such as artistic originality and the uniqueness of the aesthetic experience that can be gained from consulting individual pieces. Moreover, seeking evidence of what is directly accessible to sense experience may seriously underestimate the extent to which 'external factors' associated with the surrounding culture pervasively, yet subtly, influence human perceptions. Hence, empiricism in analytical aesthetics is reductionist in so far as it entails an imposition of categories that predetermines the spectator's representations of the artwork. The alternative is not presuppositionless enquiry, which is an impossibility; it is for the spectator to allow direct aesthetic experience with the artwork to challenge, and perhaps modify, his or her conceptual categories.

A major difference, then, between the empiricism of analytical aesthetics and the 'empiricism' of Continental aesthetics is that of the relationship of 'objective reality' to the 'knowing subject.' In the former, observation takes place on the assumption that objectivity is attainable through a process of accumulating representations of increasing accuracy. The emphasis is on the art 'object' and the methodological instruments employed to investigate it rather than on

the 'knowing subject.' Difficulties of interpretation are in principle resolvable by attending more carefully to available evidence, by gaining a better quality of evidence over time, or by improving the methodological instruments. In Continental aesthetics, by contrast, the subject/object relationship is considered problematic. An observer's pre-conceived notions may result in a distorted view of the artwork: hence the need to suppress such notions, whilst at the same time adopting an attitude of receptivity towards the artwork that is open to whatever it might convey. The main idea is that understanding is always from the observer's point of view: 'All understanding involves interpretation, and all interpretation involves understanding' (Bernstein, op. cit., p.138).

#### 4.4.2 Social Origin and Justification of Knowledge Claims and the Problem of Relativism

A broad unity of purpose underlies the theoretical frameworks referred to above: it is that debates and controversies at the meta-philosophical level have what Bernstein (ibid., p.2) has called '... a single concern and focus: to determine the nature and scope of human rationality'. The issue at the heart of these debates concerns the extent to which the investigation of phenomena and the concomitant increase in knowledge involves 'making' or 'discovering' reality. This is not an 'either/or.' According to Rorty (op. cit., p.342), a too sharp distinction between '... the "found" world of neutrons (and) the "made" world of social relationships' rest on the unwarranted assumption that social phenomena are inherently resistant to objective explanation. The problem of distinguishing between finding and making is common to the investigation of all kinds of phenomena: people and

their activities (including making and appreciating art) are generally more difficult to understand than things, but, in Rorty's view, there is no reason to deny the problem of reductionism discussed in the previous section. No master vocabulary exists for making sense of phenomena, but this does not preclude the development over time of new sophisticated, non-reductive vocabularies which in, for example, the realm of art criticism would help us to objectify what at present we are content to leave as unexplainable.

According to Rorty (op. cit., p.170f.), analytical philosophers in the post-Wittgensteinian tradition have sought to explain the development of knowledge not as an accumulation of accurate representations of reality, but with reference to what he has called '... the social justification of belief'. He has aligned himself with philosophers such as Davidson, Quine, and Taylor, describing his (and their) position as a form of 'epistemological behaviourism' that is inimical to the notion of 'privileged representations':

Explaining rationality and epistemic authority by reference to what society lets us say, rather than the latter by the former, is the essence of what I shall call 'epistemological behaviourism', an attitude common to both Dewey and Wittgenstein ... if we understand the rules of a language-game, we understand all that there is to understand about why moves in that language-game are made ... (p.174).

Margolis, on the other hand, has linked his enquiries in aesthetics with the work of theorists such as Dickie, Goodman, and Danto, whose analyses are said to lay particular stress on the 'historical contingencies' of aesthetic criticism. Both Rorty's and Margolis's positions appear to be inescapably relativist, for as Flew (1979) has pointed out:

The relativist recognises: first, the importance of the social environment in determining the content of beliefs both about what is and what ought to be the case; and, second, the possible diversity of such social environments.  
(p.281).

However, both Rorty and Margolis have been careful to qualify their views on the social origin and justification of knowledge claims (Margolis, for example, has advocated a form of 'robust relativism', 1980a, p.136) in order to distance themselves from an extreme epistemological relativism. A prime manifestation of this extreme position was the radical sociology of knowledge of the late 1960s and early 1970s, as exemplified by the work of Berger and Luckmann (1967) in sociology and Young (1971) in the sociology of education. Its proponents claimed not only that social environment is an important factor in determining beliefs and practices, but that knowledge is in all respects a 'social construction'; a tenet that rules out any possibility of achieving ultimate representations of reality. The ubiquity of social bias which this position assumes can and should be challenged by drawing attention to those aspects of knowledge which, though inescapably social in origin, are nevertheless universally applicable. This does not mean that such knowledge may not exhibit cultural variance to some degree, but it does mean that it will have a non-reducible 'essential' core. The chief difference, then, between the relativism espoused by philosophers such as Rorty and Margolis and this more extreme version concerns the issue of whether, despite the inevitably social origin of our knowledge of the world, there are not some aspects of knowledge which transcend the influence of society. In particular, the claim made by some sociologists that all knowledge, however indirectly, is a means of serving the interests of dominant

groups in society has been strenuously resisted by philosophers (e.g., Pring, 1976, esp. Chap.4).

At the heart of debates emanating from radical sociology of knowledge is what the British sociologist Giddens (1976, p.18) has described as the problem of how to '... sustain a principle of relativity whilst rejecting relativism.' This problem is highly relevant to art education in light of the impact in recent years of radical sociology of knowledge on aesthetics, art criticism, and the history of art (see Chap. 3.2.1). For example, to claim that art can be accounted for entirely with reference to ideological interests, or that critical judgements may be interesting and informative but can never be authoritative, suggests clear implications for the teaching of criticism: the former might lead to a critique of art in the classroom that was dominated by a political agenda; the latter would entail a subjective approach to looking at artworks that emphasized experience and made scant reference to norms and criteria of evaluation. In the context of teaching metacriticism, the extremism inherent in both these approaches could be made the focus for exploring key issues concerned with the ontology of art. As the British philosopher Diffey (1984, p.168) has observed '... the critique of art as ideology' may lead us to conclude that '... art is always political (but) this does not mean that it is only political.' Radical sociology of art supplies a valuable new perspective on the nature of art and criticism which brings to the fore questions about the 'irreducibility of aesthetic value' (ibid.).



#### 4.4.3 The 'Incommensurability Thesis' and the Problem of Communication between Frameworks

Arguments for and against relativism hinge on what is meant by claiming that different belief systems, or theoretical frameworks, are incommensurable. More pointedly, it depends on what is meant by incommensurable, that is, on how different theorists understand and apply the term (Bernstein, op. cit., esp. p.79f.). The so-called 'incommensurability thesis' is central to contemporary philosophical debates, particularly in the philosophy of science; however, the issues at stake are not limited to the realm of science, for as Bernstein has remarked:

... just as it is essential to focus attention on the effective criteria for evaluating rival theories and research traditions in science, there is an analogous problem when it comes to testing and evaluating rival interpretations of texts, works of art, and traditions.  
(p.174).

What does the term incommensurability imply? First it does not imply that different groups of theorists are so '... locked into their conceptual frameworks' (ibid., pp.84-85) that they are unable to communicate with the proponents of rival theories — a position known as the 'Myth of the Framework' (ibid., p.84). On the contrary, the separate debates that take place, whether among philosophers of science, aestheticians, or art critics, bear witness to the fact that some common ground for argumentation exists; such disputes could not even begin, much less be sustained, if this were not the case.

The problem of extreme relativism, already noted in respect of the sociology of knowledge, has been endemic to debates since the early 1960s over what Bernstein has called the 'postempiricist philosophy of

science' (p.71). Radical thinkers in this field such as Kuhn and Feyerabend have been charged, unfairly according to Bernstein, with promoting a view of scientific theorizing that discounts the possibility of achieving '... fixed determinate rules for distinguishing better from worse interpretations of phenomena' (p.92). Bernstein's response to the charge of extreme relativism levelled against these theorists was to point out that relativist judgements in philosophy of science (and, by extension, aesthetics) are not necessarily irrational or ill-founded; for example, he affirmed that '... to say that social practices are radically contingent does not mean that they are arbitrary' (p.204; cf. p.1). Instead, he has insisted that theoretical frameworks are incommensurable in the sense that they cannot be made intelligible point by point with reference to a higher generic set of concepts. By way of illustration, he cited the anthropologist Geertz's comparison of the radically different concepts of self held by cultural groups in Bali, Java, and Morocco. The 'philosophical ethnocentrism' which projects or imposes '... well entrenched beliefs, attitudes, standards, methods, and procedures' (p.91) on phenomena is characteristic of each of these frameworks, as is the attempt to make sense of them through a matrix of European anthropological theory (cf. Redfield, 1959, pp.40-42).

An extreme relativist in art terms would be one who insisted that standards were arbitrary and that artistic value was a matter of personal taste. As a role model for teaching metacriticism, extreme relativism would be somewhat limited in scope, to say the least, and probably a contradiction in terms. Unstructured talk about art in the classroom might, however, lead to speculation about the respective

merits of different artworks and methods of criticism, even when this reflects a profound scepticism on the teacher's part about the existence of universal standards (cf. Bernstein, op. cit., pp.11-12).

The analogy Bernstein has drawn between philosophy of science and anthropology is instructive because it enables abstract philosophical debates to be translated into concrete situations. This is especially pertinent to art education as the development of pupils' appreciation of art forms across cultures has in recent years become an important pedagogical focus (e.g. Taylor, 1986; Mason, 1988). Inasmuch as the activity of appreciation depends on grasping the different concepts of 'art' of alien cultures, it is vital that art teachers who seek to link critical studies to an understanding of cultural contexts ought in turn to recognize that debates in philosophy over '... the nature and scope of human rationality' (Bernstein, op. cit., p.2) are foundational to this enterprise.

The 'incommensurability thesis' lies at the heart of the problem of '... how to account for the fact that we have knowledge of a world that is essentially conditioned by our understanding.' (ibid., pp.75-76). Because the world we encounter is constituted by our individual conceptual frameworks, there seems little justification in viewing reality as a dichotomy of '... "objects" which exist an sich and "subjects" that are detached from and stand over against them' (p.166). We may believe, if we are philosophical realists, that '... such objects exist independently of being perceived' (Flew, 1979, p.278), but in our knowledge of the world we cannot escape from the determinative influence of our perceptions. However, these

perceptions are not personal and idiosyncratic in an exclusively subjectivist sense, rather they reflect the socio-cultural and intellectual traditions to which we belong. This social bias in turn implies that rationality is not supra-historical, but on the contrary, '... essentially involves the notion of a community' (Bernstein, op. cit., pp.77-78) which generates shared meanings, not on an exclusively theoretical level by means of pure thought, but by a process of applying practical wisdom in which advances in knowledge are brought about through testing and modifying theory in situations that are not fully anticipated, or which call for judgements that set precedents. In his discussion of relativism and hermeneutic analysis, Giddens (1976) also has addressed the problem of how communication is possible between incommensurable discourses. Equally with Rorty and Bernstein, he rejected the idea that the '... premises of formal logic' (p.147) provide a touchstone of rationality by which to test the validity claims of divergent theoretical frameworks. As pointed out already, there are common assumptions between different frameworks — the notions of identity and contradiction, for instance — that have a degree of universality in that they provide the basic premises for distinguishing that which is characteristic or true of a particular framework. However, to grasp the incommensurable, that is, the distinctly 'other' of an unfamiliar discourse, alien culture, etc., it is necessary to engage in the hermeneutic task of exploring the meanings of that discourse within the context of its practical outworking as a '... particular form of life' (p.148). Because this seems to imply that the interpreter should be open to a novel way of thinking, it raises the question of how it is possible to grasp the

meanings of unfamiliar discourses when we have only the conceptual modes of expression of our own to draw upon.

On the one hand, projecting or imposing one's own conceptual categories on an unfamiliar discourse will not preserve the integrity of the latter and hence will fail to capture its essential quality. On the other hand, it is entirely artificial to expect that one can succeed in 'going native,' that is, fully to relinquish categories of thought that are bound up with our personal histories. It is axiomatic of hermeneutic and phenomenological theory that the meanings of the 'things themselves' (Bernstein, op. cit., p.137) directly perceived can only be grasped as a result of a dialectical process in which the 'horizon' of the 'object' is fused with the interpreter's horizon, containing as it does all of the preconceptions or 'forestructures' gained from traditions that are determinative, in subtly different ways, of each person's view of the world.

The point here is that communication is possible between different frameworks precisely because they are not self-contained. The analogy Giddens has drawn between universes of meaning and languages is instructive and easy to grasp (ibid., p.145). New languages develop out of existing ones: English, for example, is highly eclectic. Languages are sophisticated conventional systems enabling human affairs to be conducted with a high degree of prediction and control, even though, in language translation, it is often impossible to arrive at exact equivalents of word-meaning. The mediation that takes place between different frameworks is analogous to language translation: a basis exists for reaching a large measure of agreement, but there are

also residual areas of experience that resist attempts to achieve precision. This observation parallels the point made earlier that, given the social origin and justification of knowledge claims, the search for a universal language of commensuration is futile.

The foregoing discussion of theory has revealed the existence of two extreme positions, both of which may be elaborated in some detail, namely: (i) that theoretical frameworks are self-contained universes of meaning and thus provide no basis for inter-communication; and (ii) that the divergencies that exist between theoretical frameworks are temporary owing to the current state of knowledge and that eventually all discourses will be subsumed under a neutral language or higher generic set of terms. Aside from these extremes and their ramifications is a balanced realisation that there exists between even the most alien of cultures a basic experience of being-in-the-world that provides some ground for developing mutual understanding. This appears to be the case whether one considers the problem of interpreting the works and actions of the members of alien cultures, or 'listens in' on the 'conversations' of Western philosophers. Reference here to a commonality of human experience does not necessarily imply that '... the world exists independently of being perceived' (Flew, op. cit.); nor does it necessarily imply that reality is socially constructed in the radical sense assumed by conventionalists among philosophers and sociologists. Rather, the recognition that 'mediation' between discourses is needed suggests that the best hope is for a fruitful coexistence between divergent positions, in which they draw closer together but never amalgamate. Margolis's (1980c, p.228, emphasis in orig.) observation that '...

there is some biological, nonconventional disposition underlying all cultural conventions' indicates that both divergence and convergence will continue to characterize the intellectual life of Mankind. The implication of this conclusion for art education, and the teaching of metacriticism in particular, is that a full range of philosophical positions bearing on the ontology of art ought to be presented to learners and that this should include a 'polar contrast' of the kinds of extreme positions identified above. Second, the attention of learners should be focused on what is involved in combining the insights, whilst avoiding the shortcomings, of such positions.

#### 4.5 Summary

In this chapter, a major opposition in philosophical aesthetics has been explored, namely, that between analytical and Continental traditions. However, standard oppositions were found to exist at a deeper level that 'cut across' a simple dichotomy of analytical/Continental theorizing: hence, distinctions were made with reference to underlying theoretical frameworks and their conceptual characteristics. In particular, an examination of primary research sources has indicated the existence of a substantive opposition within Anglo-American analytical philosophy between a majority 'view' in which epistemology — the quest for universal commensuration through rationalist and empirical investigation — is paramount, and a more radical 'view' in which the link between meaning and reality is couched in terms of the coexistence of incommensurable discourses. The former, it has already been noted, involves convergence and consequently risks a charge of reductionism. However, the latter, because it involves accepting the viability of incommensurable

discourses, risks the opposite charge of relativism. This opposition is paralleled in the aesthetics of criticism: 'the empiricist strain' (Margolis, op. cit.), of which Formalism is a prime example, lays stress on determining the intrinsic properties of the artwork with reference to general principles of formal organization; on the other hand, Contextualism (in its many forms) emphasizes the aesthetic relevance of socio-cultural factors to the production and reception of art. Hence, the previously stated aim of exploring the notion of 'standard oppositions' in philosophy in order to cast light on the intrinsic/extrinsic dispute in the aesthetics of criticism appears to be justified.

A number of pedagogical implications have arisen from the foregoing analysis of theory. Certain key polarizations were identified as important foci for teaching strategies, notably those associated with reductionist tendencies in empiricist aesthetics and relativist tendencies in hermeneutic and so-called postempiricist approaches to the investigation of both natural and social phenomena. It is thought likely that the difference between these positions, as regards theories of criticism, could be best exploited by engaging learners in a discussion of extremist versions and then gradually introducing them to a more sophisticated presentation of the ontological and epistemological issues involved. Extremist positions identified in the course of this chapter are presented below. These will form the basis of more detailed work in subsequent chapters aimed at exploring the pedagogical implications of controversy in philosophical aesthetics with reference to test cases of artworks and critical writings.



1. An extreme relativism which denies the possibility of achieving ultimate representations of reality. In aesthetics this would entail a denial of critical objectivity. Extreme relativism emerges in positions such as radical sociology of knowledge, which Giddens (op. cit., p.143) has described as the classic error of assuming that '... the validity of scientific theories can be reduced to the interests that might play a part in generating them' and radical sociology of art which leads to the '... disappearance of art as anything but ideology' (Wolff quoted by Diffey, op. cit., p.168).

2. The 'Myth of the Framework': a position in which it is assumed that when we engage in the interpretation of either natural or social phenomena, we are '... prisoners caught in the framework of our theories, our expectations, our past experiences, our language' (Bernstein, op. cit., pp.84 & 91).

3. A naive historicism which assumes that interpreters are able to project themselves into the spirit of an alien age or culture: '... to think with its ideas and its thoughts, not with our own, and thus advance towards historical objectivity' (Gadamer quoted by Bernstein, op. cit., p.140).

4. A subjectivism which holds that judgements about art, or indeed anything else, are a matter of personal preference and are thus not subject to rational argument: a position countered by Bernstein on the grounds that '... taste is communal, not idiosyncratic' (op. cit., p.119).

5. A reductive empiricism which fails to take full account of the values and interests of interpreters, whether of natural or social phenomena, and which thus presupposes a false dichotomy between subject and object. In aesthetics, this would result in 'thin ontologies' of the artwork; in criticism, it would amount to a 'perceptually restricted' range of judgements (Margolis, 1980b, p.6).

In this chapter, recognition of these extreme positions has emerged from an analysis of meta-philosophical controversy. Links with controversy in aesthetics have been speculated upon and tentative suggestions made about strategies for metacriticism in art education. In continuing this investigation of controversy in aesthetics, the emphasis will shift from a consideration of ontological issues in respect of perceived reality to the problems raised by the perception of art. Hence, the research strategy in the following chapter will be to explore key aspects of the aesthetics of art criticism which bear on the problem of demarcating the boundaries of artworks and distinguishing internal from external evidence. Concurrently, parallels will be drawn, where appropriate, with the extreme positions already identified in this chapter. It is anticipated that this strategy will bring the research a step closer to the development of curricular proposals.

## CHAPTER 5

### ISSUES IN AESTHETIC CONTROVERSY

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to explore the nature of aesthetic controversy in the light of conclusions reached earlier regarding standard oppositions of philosophy (Chap. 4.5). The aim is to initiate propositions about the relation of art and criticism which could provide a basis for future art education studies in the areas of curriculum development and research.

In Chapter 3, an investigation was made into art education theory and practice with a view to exploring current views about teaching metacriticism in relation to the history and criticism of art. This led to the conclusion that metacritical enquiry in the classroom entails the teaching of a range of divergent views on the nature of art, which should encompass Continental and Continentally-inspired thought as well as the broad tradition of Anglo-American analytical philosophy. In Chapter 4, an investigation was made into the nature of controversy in aesthetics with reference to standard oppositions of general philosophy; this was conducted to obtain a more complete picture of the conceptual issues underlying metacritical disputes. In brief, Chapter 4 was an attempt to set metacriticism in the context of metaphilosophy. Consequently, standard oppositions of philosophical theory were identified, with the aim of linking them to polarisations

in aesthetics, thereby establishing a basis for developing metacritical enquiry in art education. These standard oppositions were found to be associated with theoretical frameworks that straddle the distinction between Continental and analytical traditions; moreover, they were defined with reference to a continuum between extreme reductionist and relativist orientations regarding the nature of perceived reality.

In this present chapter, the extreme positions adumbrated in the summary of Chapter 4 will be explored in more detail with reference to key issues in contemporary philosophical aesthetics. (It is assumed that teaching metacriticism entails making comparisons across the widest range of critical options and that this range is best reflected by the polar contrasts of aesthetic theory.) In particular, the idealism/materialism distinction in philosophy will be compared with the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction in aesthetics and art criticism. This will involve a synthesis of several different levels of theory, namely, general philosophy, philosophical aesthetics, philosophy of education in respect of curriculum orientations and procedures, professional art criticism, and art criticism/metacriticism in the classroom. A successful curriculum outcome depends on co-ordinating insights from each of these levels without at the same time blurring their distinctive contributions.

The enquiry which forms the basis of this chapter will focus on one of the texts which functioned as primary sources for Chapter 4, namely, Margolis's (1980a) Art and Philosophy: Conceptual Issues in

Aesthetics. The reason for this choice is that the author is representative of a number of philosophers in the analytical tradition who, in recent years, have addressed a range of major issues in philosophy whilst, at the same time, considering seriously the contributions of Continental and Continentally-inspired thinkers (see Chaps. 4.1 & 4.2). On publication, the book's reviewers were largely enthusiastic about its depth, comprehensiveness, and relevance to contemporary debates in philosophical aesthetics (Wolterstorff, 1981; Matthews, 1982; Prior, 1982; Walton, 1982; Lamarque, 1983; Schaper, 1983; Janaway, 1984). It appears to be especially relevant to the present research because it contains an in-depth study of the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction in the aesthetics of criticism. According to Wolterstorff:

Throughout his book, Margolis does battle with the rather standard assumption that works of art are in some way peculiarly perceptual. He wants to 'cast doubt on theories that treat artworks exhaustively, essentially, characteristically, or distinctively in terms of perceptual qualities' (p.6). His contention is that artworks are culturally emergent objects; being such, they have nonperceptible, 'intentional,' 'properties which are aesthetically significant. The book is fundamentally an explanation and elaboration of that thesis. (op. cit., p.455).

Margolis's treatise is relevant to the aims of the present enquiry because, unlike many of the works in the same field, it represents an attempt to link conceptual issues in aesthetics to the problems of criticism. As such, it appears to have good potential as a source of ideas for developing metacritical enquiry in the classroom. Nevertheless, the reviewers raised enough criticisms over the argumentation and style of the book to suggest that its author's

claims should not be relied on too heavily. For example, Matthews's comment that '... surprisingly little attention is paid to the critical and appreciative practice that is said to be the touchstone of aesthetic theory' (op. cit., p.109) could be taken to imply that translating Margolis's ideas into classroom practice would require an imaginative leap involving an amalgamation of aesthetic and pedagogical theory with test cases of artworks and extracts from critical writings. With this caution in mind, Art and Philosophy will be approached in this chapter as an authoritative but by no means infallible guide to current debates in contemporary aesthetics: it will be used to stimulate questions from an art education standpoint regarding the efficacy of such debates for curriculum development.

Several such debates are examined in the Margolis text. One in particular, the controversy over artistic intention, was identified in Chapter 1 of this thesis as a starting point for the current research. It emerged as a key issue because it was thought to provide a focus for raising questions about the ontological status of artworks and exploring the aesthetic relevance of intrinsic and extrinsic evidence. More especially, it was assumed to be a representative dispute, one that by means of conceptual analysis would reveal the interconnectedness of many different aspects of aesthetic controversy. In the present chapter, several of these aspects found in the Margolis text will be examined with a view to revealing points of connection between them, whilst at the same time widening the scope of current art education theorizing about metacriticism. However, discussion of the controversy over intention will be deferred until Chapter 6 to

enable the kinds of curricular implications emerging from the present chapter to be explored in greater depth via a specific focus.

Margolis first examined problems connected with philosophical attempts to define 'The Work of Art' (Part 1) and then considered those arising from the practice of 'Criticism and Appreciation' (Part 2). Accordingly, the problems of the latter were said by him to be logical extensions of the former:

Critics and historians of the arts readily confuse the logical status of their own comments because of their confusion and prejudice about the nature of what they are commenting upon. (p. 27).

A clear implication of this remark for professional art critics and historians, as well as for teachers of art criticism and history, is that sound practice is dependent on at least a working knowledge of philosophical aesthetics. Understanding the different ways in which art is defined by aestheticians should lead to a richer experience of critical alternatives. Moreover, as a curriculum strategy, the attempt to discriminate the respective merits of different ontological stances in relation to criticism would amount to 'doing metacriticism.'

As noted above, Margolis's attempt to link philosophical aesthetics and art criticism is relevant to the present research because, by drawing together these two levels of theory, he exemplified metacriticism in action. More especially, his approach involved identifying radical differences in theory concerning the ontology of art and discussing them in relation to equally radical differences in

critical practice. This polemical focus corresponds with the contrast of extreme positions outlined in the summary of the previous chapter (see Chap. 4.5): it therefore provides a model, and ensures continuity, for the aim of translating ideas gained from that chapter's analysis of standard oppositions in philosophy into art education theory and practice.

## 5.2 The Concept 'Artwork' and the Problem of Definition

Margolis attempted to reach a theoretically convincing position on the ontology of artworks by first attacking the 'extremes' of idealism and materialism. He described these in the following terms as

... an excessive idealism that finds nothing in the public world that would count as a work of art, and an excessive (or reductive) materialism that denies that anything exists that is not merely and entirely physical (p.27; cf. pp.28-32)

Against the former position, it can be affirmed that critical discourse typically proceeds on the assumption that artworks are material objects. What is said about artworks cannot avoid making reference to their materiality, to the fact that they are invariably experienced through the senses, and that the properties ascribed to them by critics are confirmable or refutable by means of public scrutiny and debate. The central feature of the idealist account is that it posits a separation between the artwork (conceived as transcendent reality) and its material form. It presents, therefore, a dualistic definition of the nature of art that entails acceptance of a bifurcation of works into 'inner' and 'outer' realms of existence.



Against (reductive) materialism, Margolis maintained that what critics say about artworks refers not only to their materiality, but through it to attributes which are not reducible in terms of physical properties alone. He argued that artworks differ from mere physical objects because the critic, in ascribing non-perceptual properties to a work, is necessarily presupposing the intentions of the artist. Noting the '... ready availability of specimens which cannot be sorted in perceptual terms' (p.6), Margolis cited specific examples in order to demonstrate the anomalous character of the materialist perspective. For instance, the status of Duchamp's 'Bottlerack' as an artwork was shown to be problematic from this standpoint. The bottlerack as it came from the manufacturer (i.e., prior to Duchamp's choosing of it) and the bottlerack which Duchamp exhibited, remain one and the same material object. Nevertheless, the ontological status of the object had changed: at a point in time it had come to be regarded in a different way; to be ascribed properties which, in view of the absence of any material change, could only be characterized in non-perceptual terms.

Beginning with this admittedly extreme example of a Duchamp 'ready-made', and other examples of objets trouvés, Margolis extended his argument to include standard works. The problem for those who treat art exclusively in terms of perceptual qualities was shown to be particularly 'troublesome' in the case of '... appraisals based on the interpretation of works of art' (p.46). Whilst recognizing that some works present few if any problems for the interpreter (e.g., the paintings of Grandma Moses), Margolis showed that in more complex

instances (Matisse's 'The Piano Lesson' and Leonardo's 'The Last Supper', cf. pp.121-122 and p.43) different critics may advance radically divergent interpretations, thereby providing alternative matrices through which hitherto unrecognized features of a work are brought to critical attention. Interpretations serve, therefore, to ascribe qualities which would otherwise lie undetected; but such qualities cannot be said to be 'in' the work in quite the same way as features which are open to straightforward description.

Margolis's discussion of the distinction between artworks and mere physical objects highlights an important characteristic of the former: that they are dependent for their identification as such on a culturally informed viewpoint. In this connection, he proposed his own solution of the ontological problem outlined above by introducing the concepts of 'physical embodiment' and 'cultural emergence'. These were said to provide the necessary 'foci of any ontological proposal' (p.39 f.) and thereby facilitate a meaningful discussion of artworks. He claimed that the former avoids the main defect of the idealist account because it '... provides a basis for speaking of emergence without losing the advantages of reference and identity' (p.39). Conversely, whilst embodiment serves thus to fix critical reference to the physical properties of the artwork, it also preserves the distinctive ontological status of the work, because '... to be embodied in an object is not to be identical with it' (ibid.). 'Emergence' conveys the sense of an entity coming into view as the result of critical enquiry, whereby there is a resolution of what had previously been unfocused and inchoate. However, in order to distance

himself from the inevitable dualism which this implies, Margolis pointed out that the properties of artworks and other cultural phenomena

... are emergent not in the sense that a novel substance mysteriously evolved out of a physical substratum, but in the sense that, in familiar contexts of discourse, we admit novel particulars that possess properties essentially lacking in purely physical objects. (p.48)

The phrase 'familiar contexts of discourse' refers to the concept of cultural emergence. It indicates that emergent entities are defined as such only within an appreciative tradition. Artworks are, therefore, 'rule-governed ... and rule following' (p.46). Even Conceptual Art, which questions and even denies the artifactuality of the artwork, '... cannot but be parasitic on crafted work' (ibid., cf. p.83 f.); which presumably means that without historical precedents to react against, the prime objective of Conceptual Art would be meaningless: indeed, it could not historically have taken place. Aside from Margolis's critique of extreme versions of idealism and materialism, his 'middle ground' conceptions of physical embodiment and cultural emergence have been challenged by other aestheticians (Wolterstorff, op. cit.; Matthews, op. cit.; Prior, op. cit.). Wolterstorff, for example, in questioning the validity of the former, cited counter-instances to show that '... it is neither necessary nor sufficient that cultural objects be distinct from but embodied in physical objects (or events)' (p.459). However, the details of philosophical argument over the ontology of art are of less immediate significance to this enquiry than that Margolis's analysis provides a working model for exploring a range of theoretical positions and the

different approaches to art criticism that these imply. The concept of cultural emergence could be used by art educators to focus learners' attention on fundamental philosophical questions about meaning and objectivity. Its main emphasis, namely, that artworks possess properties that are not perceptually accessible, invites comparison with the characteristic claim of hermeneutic theorists that art objects do not possess meanings separate from the presuppositional framework that interpreters bring to the task of criticism.<sup>1</sup> What Margolis has claimed for the concept of cultural emergence in respect of defining art is closely paralleled by Gadamer's insistence that '... meaning is always coming into being through the "happening" of understanding' (in Bernstein, 1983, p.139). Meaning is neither contained within the art object, nor wholly projected by the interpreter, but is forged by the dynamic and subtly shifting interplay of 'horizons' within which critical activity takes place.

Debates in aesthetics over what is to count as evidence for critical appraisal are, fundamentally, disagreements about the nature of objectivity (Margolis, op. cit., p.107f). These in turn are a reflection of debates in the 'postempiricist philosophy of science' over the question of how to maintain that different systems of thought are incommensurable without denying that a basis exists for making comparisons between them (Bernstein, op. cit., p.71f.; Giddens, 1976, p.18; see also Chap. 4.4.2 & Chap. 4.4.3). The nature of critical objectivity is, perhaps, nowhere more closely scrutinized than in the hermeneutic tradition; for as well as denying invariance of meaning to the artwork, hermeneutics presents the critic as a far from detached

agent. The intersubjectivity of artwork and percipient is brought out most fully in terms of the so-called 'hermeneutic circle' which Hirsch (1967) described as follows:

... every interpreter labors (sic) under the handicap of an inevitable circularity: all his internal evidence tends to support his hypothesis because much of it was constituted by his hypothesis. (p.166).

Palmer (1969), in a chapter on Gadamer's hermeneutical aesthetics, also recognized the historical character of the critic's viewpoint. He pointed out that a need exists for critics to become more critically aware of their own performances and of the effect of those performances on their perceptions of the artwork:

Gadamer's approach, then, is closer to the dialectic of Socrates than to modern manipulative and technological thinking. Truth is not reached methodically but dialectically; the dialectical approach to truth is seen as the antithesis of method to pre-structure the individual's way of seeing. Strictly speaking, method is incapable of revealing new truth; it only renders explicit the kind of truth already implicit in the method. (p.165).

These quotations demonstrate the inseparable link between theory of art and methods of art criticism. As with the search in epistemology for a single all-encompassing language of commensuration (Bernstein, op. cit., p.172), attempts to reach a comprehensive definition of art are faced with two difficulties: on the one hand, precision is hard to achieve without unhelpfully restricting what is to count as art; on the other, inclusiveness can lead all too easily to a situation in which little basis exists for objectivity and the sharing of critical judgements. In this connection, the American aesthetician Stolnitz

(1960, p.205f.) discussed the respective merits of four major theories of art (imitation theories, formalism, emotionalist theory, and the theory of aesthetic 'fineness') and concluded that (i) each contributes something to our understanding of art, and (ii) none is successful as a comprehensive theory. He stated that '... each theory asks different questions about the art object and throws light upon different aspects of it.' This comment implies that the artwork is a complex entity that no single viewpoint can get into focus, just as the six sides of a cube cannot be viewed simultaneously from one position. What appears to be missing from this metaphor, though, is a recognition that different theories of art do not just reveal different aspects of the same, albeit complex object, for if no single theory can be said to account for the 'object,' then we are left with a range of alternative ontological conceptions. Stolnitz (ibid., p.403) later conceded as much when he described as obsolete the objectivist view that '... aesthetic value exists in the work independently of any relations between the work and the spectator.' His insistence that the properties of artworks may be objectively assessed '... in relational terms' (ibid.) invites comparison with Rorty's (op. cit., p.170f.) rejection of 'privileged representations' in favour of '... the social justification of belief' (see above, Chap. 4.4.2).

In the previous chapter (Chap. 4.4.3) reference was made to Margolis's (1980c, p.228) observation that '... there is some biological, nonconventional disposition underlying all cultural conventions.' In the light of the present enquiry into aesthetic theory, this suggests

that the existence of the material entities called artworks is not in doubt, but because of the differing pre-judgements of critics, no one can give an authoritative and exhaustive definition of art with which to fix the boundaries of individual works. Hence 'culturally-informed viewpoint' is a decisive element in the ontology of art. Whereas the determinative influence of the critic can be over-emphasized as in the case of extreme idealism and the mysticism that results from it, the object-ness of the work can also be over-emphasized as in the case of extreme materialism and the objectivism it encourages. Both are '...suspect extremes ... totally unhelpful in conceptual dealings with art' (Schaper, op. cit., p.362). On the other hand, the dual notions of physical embodiment and cultural emergence could provide the focus for an approach to the teaching of criticism and metacriticism that avoids such extremes and is thus more representative of the complexities of interpretive activity.

In brief, the views of Margolis and the other theorists discussed in this section indicate that criticism and the teaching of criticism can all too easily be conducted without any reference to problems connected with the definition and identification of art. Implications arising from this section are (i) that exploring the ontological presuppositions of various kinds of critical practice adds a rich dimension to art criticism; and (ii) that the contrast of extreme positions and discussion of alternatives involved in this strategy is a potentially fruitful way of developing learners' knowledge of the conceptual issues involved.

### 5.3 The Description/Interpretation Dichotomy

In this chapter to date, conceptual issues in the ontology of art have been examined with a view to speculating about pedagogical strategies for the analytical/critical domain. The emphasis has been on problems involved in identifying and defining artworks as a prerequisite of critical appraisal, rather than on problems arising from the critical process per se. In the remainder of this chapter, key aspects of aesthetic theory relating to actual criticism will be focused upon; these were at least implicit in the previous chapter, for example the relation of description to interpretation (see Chap. 4.4.1).

The distinctions already noted between idealism/materialism and relativism/objectivism have a strong bearing on the relation of description to interpretation. Writers on theory of art criticism who incline towards an extremist position on the ontology of art either '... collapse interpretation into description' or vice versa (Lamarque, op. cit., pp.267-268). Radical relativists would seem to belong to the first group in that they stress the interpretive character of descriptive statements to the point where these lose their otherwise distinctive character and become subsumed as part of an overall interpretive dimension. Against this extreme position, it could be maintained that artworks possess properties which are stable, enumerable, and susceptible of a large measure of critical agreement. Description is thus a relatively straightforward operation requiring little special effort on the critic's part. Interpretation, on the other hand, suggests 'a touch of virtuosity' and 'an inventive use of the materials present'; it thereby illuminates relationships and



interconnections between these materials in such a way as to resolve what is puzzling or recondite in particular instances (pp.110-112). The critic might therefore be said to synthesize or add to that which is descriptively available in the work.

Aside from radical relativists are those who adopt an objectivist view of the artwork. These are drawn mainly from the tradition of analytical aesthetic theory and include writers like Beardsley who, according to Margolis, hold that the critic's task is to '...eliminate all interpretations but "the" correct one' (p.128). In their efforts to focus attention on the work itself, writers in this tradition are said to underestimate the motivating power behind the critic's (and the artist's) performance. The critic is assumed to be a more or less neutral agent who is capable of adopting a detached stance over against the artwork; hence, in contrast to the emphasis of phenomenology and hermeneutics, for example, the historical character of the critic's activity is not fully taken into account. By contrast, 'phenomenological description' does not merely consist in 'taking inventory' of a work (Spiegelberg, 1971, pp.672-673; cf. Feldman, 1972, p.467). It '... begins in silence' by seeking first to grasp the phenomenon intuitively: a process which involves a willingness on the critic's part to reassess the perceptual categories on which his or her descriptions are based (Spiegelberg, *ibid.*).

The different senses of description examined here are methodologically suggestive from the standpoint of art instruction. Learners could be taught to consider the selectivity entailed by 'description;' in

particular, it could be shown that data obtained through the activity of describing are subtly determined by the questions asked of the phenomenon. It is not mere information gathering. In the case of complex entities such as (some) artworks, it is not possible to describe them exhaustively.

In this connection, the view that artworks are culturally emergent entities (which cannot be accounted for in strictly perceptual terms) implies that a clear dividing line between description and interpretation is impossible to achieve. Only in the more manifest instances of critical discourse can the distinction be drawn with any certainty; and even then the relationship of the two levels of operation remains an ambiguous one. Margolis outlined the problem as follows:

Criticism is methodologically treated as interpretive in the sense that any account will be viewed as plausible more than as true, once what is indisputably descriptive has been provided — and always with a caution that the work may be construed in alternative ways. There is absolutely no need here to fix once and for all — without attention to the peculiarities of particular works — what is descriptively assignable to any set of artworks. There is no minimal list. That is, the problem of interpretation is precisely what it is because there is no formal demarcation line between what is descriptably present in a work and what may be interpretively imputed to it. But this is not to say that we cannot specify what is (minimally) descriptively true of a particular work and what is (certainly) interpretively imputed to it. (p.127).

Nevertheless, though descriptive and interpretive statements cannot be clearly demarcated, the distinction between them should be maintained because on logical grounds there are clearly two kinds of activity, each involving characteristic uses of critical language: statements

which provide 'accurate', 'comprehensive', 'detailed', or 'exact' information about artworks are logically distinct from statements which refer to aspects which are 'shocking', 'startling', 'impressive', 'affected', or 'exaggerated' (ibid. p.111). Of course, the difficulty of distinguishing between description and interpretation is made apparent by terms which cannot be readily assigned to either category, for example, 'harmonious', 'balanced', and 'evocative.'

In the light of these observations, there appear to be two senses in which the term 'interpretation' can be used, each with implications for the teaching of metacriticism. First, the virtuosity which is typically accorded to the interpreter may be merely honorific if his task consists in disclosing the hidden (yet describable) features of a complex work. Such an act of disclosure is methodologically different in degree, though not in kind, from that of straightforward description. It is a heightened form of description: the sensitive discrimination of connoisseurship, as typified by the phenomenologist. Second, interpretation may be used to denote the action of the critic in seeming to exceed what is readily available for inspection. Such interpretation is methodologically different from the first sense of the term, in that the critic might more justifiably be said to 'read into' the work meanings which are fugitive in character and which, at best, can only be advanced on a basis of plausibility. The distinction between these two senses of 'interpretation' is exceedingly difficult to make in particular instances. It is,

however, the point at which disagreement arises over what is descriptively in a work and what is interpretively imputed to it.

The different senses of description and interpretation examined in this section have implications for teaching metacriticism beyond those discussed in Chapter 3.3. Art education theorists have tended to use these terms with an objectivist bias, which in practical terms encourages an over-confidence in the ability of the learner-critic to make objective, empirically-based descriptions (e.g. Feldman, op. cit., p.267). The examination of controversy in aesthetics in the present chapter has revealed instead that the link between description and interpretation is problematic when viewed philosophically in the light of critical practice.

#### 5.4 The Acceptance of Divergent Interpretations of Given Artworks

In a chapter entitled 'The Logic of Interpretation' Margolis asserted that, 'Philosophically, the most interesting feature of critical interpretation is its tolerance of alternative and seemingly contrary hypotheses' (pp.156-157). This tolerance of alternatives reflects an ontological distinction between physical objects and artworks. The former are fully susceptible of description; hence, the explanation of such phenomena is typically advanced in causal terms, that is, on the basis of a model of truth and falsity. On the other hand, because artworks are entities of a culturally emergent kind, they require a different type of explanation based instead on the (logically weaker) model of plausibility and implausibility.

In this connection, Margolis compared the methodologies of the natural sciences and those employed in aesthetic criticism. After first acknowledging that the natural sciences are centrally concerned with achieving causal explanations of phenomena, he proceeded to demonstrate (by reference to hypotheses about the origin of the solar system) the utility, indeed the propriety, of the plausibility/implausibility model for scientific research. When scientists appeal to grounds of plausibility in support of their hypotheses, they do so (typically, in the case of cosmological hypotheses) '... because of technical inability to gain the desired information' (p.160). This inability is, however, a temporary one: advances in technology permit an increasing range of hypothesis-testing to be conducted on the basis of a truth/falsity model. Therefore, even the seemingly unsolvable problems of cosmology may ultimately yield to causal explanation.

By contrast with the methodologies of the natural sciences, Margolis asserted that '... considerations of plausibility are more nearly central to aesthetic criticism' (ibid.). The main difference between the appeal to plausibility in the natural sciences and in aesthetic criticism is that, in the latter case, the characteristic indeterminateness of aesthetic objects makes it '... quite impossible to show that interpretive judgements can be true' (ibid., emphasis in orig.). This indicates that artworks are not susceptible of eventual explanation in causal terms. Their culturally emergent nature thus renders them ineligible, as a class of entities, from ever yielding to explanation on the basis of a truth/falsity model.

Beardsley (1970a) had previously taken issue with Margolis over this understanding of the term 'plausibility' and especially his use of the term to defend the acceptance of competing interpretations of a single work. According to Beardsley:

We do not discover, according to Margolis's view, that interpretations are true or false, but only that they are 'plausible' — and though two incompatible statements cannot both be true, they can both be plausible. But plausibility is at least an appearance of truth based upon some relevant evidence, and any statement that is plausible must be in principle capable of being shown to be true or false. (p.43, emphasis in orig.)

However, this all depends on whether or not the two incompatible statements are made in the context of a common theoretical framework. The Freudian interpretation of Hamlet was presumably incompatible with all that preceded it because it emanated from a different set of premises and involved asking characteristically new questions of the text (Margolis, 1980a, p.155). Discussion of plausibility in relation to truth further reflects the problem examined in Chapter 4.4.3. concerning the notion of incommensurability. It was noted with reference to Bernstein's and Giddens's analyses of research in the sciences that to define 'truth' with reference to '... a permanent ahistorical matrix or neutral descriptive language' (Bernstein, p.172) was untenable, because it failed to take into account the rivalry of theories and traditions underlying the ostensibly monolithic character of scientific progress. Hence, in speaking of a truth/falsity model, care must be taken to avoid naively presenting a single, universal notion of truth. Beardsley's point that two incompatible statements cannot both be plausible appears, therefore, to be invalid if the statements arise from incompatible frameworks of interpretation: what

Margolis has called 'validating principles,' or 'imaginative schemata,' for example, the Freudian, the Marxist, and the Catholic (op. cit., p.147f).

The idea of 'incompatibility,' like that of 'incommensurability,' does not necessarily imply total, irreconcilable opposition, either of interpretive claims regarding a single artwork, or the frameworks from which claims arise. Bernstein (op. cit., p.86), commenting on Kuhn's philosophy of science, affirmed that paradigms that are logically incompatible and incommensurable are, nevertheless, comparable to a greater or lesser degree. Margolis, too, suggested that critical appraisals made on the basis of different validating principles should be designated 'incongruent' rather than 'incompatible' (p.161). The underlying point here is that critical appraisals of all kinds can and should be compared. It is, perhaps, inappropriate to ask of a painting, 'What does it mean?' Whereas to enquire in what ways its meaning can be construed suggests an openness to possibilities and alternatives. The point is that 'We invoke plausibility only when we cannot actually determine truth' (p.159); therefore, the formulation of hypotheses should be circumscribed by the level of precision that it is realistic to expect in given situations. This principle applies equally to situations in which the determination of truth is, on technical grounds, provisionally unattainable; and to those in which it is inherently unattainable, as with interpretive claims in art criticism.

The distinction that has been drawn between a truth/falsity model and a plausibility/implausibility model appears to have the following implications for both metacriticism and the teaching of metacriticism: (i) that there is little justification for holding to an unequivocal notion of artistic 'truth;' (ii) that the logically weaker notion of plausibility presupposes the existence of different belief systems, each with a distinctive set of criteria for critical appraisal; (iii) that in spite of these differences, there are sufficient points of correspondence or overlap between the belief systems to justify making comparisons between critical statements about particular works; indeed, the history of debates involving different belief systems presupposes '... their joint intelligibility and testability' (Margolis, op. cit., p.162); (iv) in the light of i-iii, learner-critics could be taught to utilise, as appropriate, the critical claims of any belief system from among the available alternatives.

What links can be drawn between these implications and the theoretical positions outlined in the summary of Chapter 4? First, discussion with learners about the notion of plausibility in relation to art criticism could be utilised as a means of exposing the dubious character of various extremist positions. For example, if the more important things we wish to say about artworks can only be advanced on a basis of plausibility, then it is inappropriate to seek a fully recoverable meaning. Second, in situations where learners are faced with a critical impasse, as is the case with most people's initial confrontation with Abstract Expressionism, teachers need a strategy for avoiding, on the one hand, '... the extreme of mutely



contemplating something without any understanding' and, on the other, '... the extreme of too easily and facilely projecting our own well-entrenched beliefs ... onto the alien phenomenon' (Bernstein, op. cit., p.91). This can be achieved by engaging learners in a non-combative dialogue with artworks, which involves a willingness to compare critical opinions from any quarter in the belief that no single theoretical framework has a monopoly on truth. In seeking to adopt a 'middle ground' between subjectivist and absolutist extremes, Margolis proposed that aestheticians should be

... hospitable to ideologically divergent views without committing themselves, in the context of aesthetic concern, to the correctness of any particular ideology - and without precluding as a matter of personal commitment, a preference for one ideology rather than another. (p.148).

Third, the notion of plausibility in respect of critical theories could be illustrated with reference to examples from what might be called the history of critical reception. The divergent 'readings' of a particular work or class of works over a period of time would reveal as much about the theoretical presuppositions of the critics as about the works themselves. For example, a comparison of the critical reception of Impressionism might be conducted with reference to their rejection by the 19th century art establishment, their acceptance by formalist critics of the early 20th century and the socio-political analyses of Marxist critics of the mid to late 20th century.

Discussion of the vicissitudes of critical reception raises questions about links between knowledge and perceptual experience. Changes in the intellectual climate of critical opinion are evidences of a

dynamic process in which beliefs about art and life interrelate with ways of depicting the world. In particular, the attempt to understand the works of recent artists in the light of the tradition from which they spring provides fresh perspectives on the work of earlier periods. For example, perceptual categories formed as a result of looking at Giotto's frescos can aid our appreciation of Cézanne; however, the creative vision of Cézanne can also enable us to approach Giotto afresh (Tilghman, 1976, pp.84-85). The relevance of perceptual theory to art criticism is explored in more detail in the following section.

#### 5.5 The Aesthetic Relevance of Ideological Factors Affecting the Production and Criticism of Artworks

In a chapter entitled 'Characteristic Qualities of Works of Art', Margolis examined the relationship between the artwork (as incorporating perceptual and non-perceptual properties) and the nature of perception. In so doing, whilst he expressly avoided making a detailed critique of the psychology of perception (p. 196), he further emphasized his earlier point that there is an inextricable link between the different levels of theory associated with the aesthetic realm. This point was also recognized by Machamer (1980), who identified three levels of relevant theory:

It is impossible to hold a well developed or coherent theory of art or art criticism without at the same time holding a theory of perception. (p.10).

The need to achieve consistency and theoretical soundness across all three levels is a recurring motif in Margolis's thesis. If an individual's theory is inadequate at one level, this inadequacy is

bound to be reflected at other levels as well. On the relation of perceptual theory to aesthetic criticism, he stated that

... there is a critical feature of perception curiously overlooked in attempts to bring the relevant work of psychology to bear on the discrimination of artworks, namely, that the cognition of perceptual forms is informed by, and depends upon, culturally contingent background beliefs. (p.196).

As noted above, the view that artworks are 'culturally emergent entities' entails a concurrent view of the percipient as one who is culturally situated. Perceptual theory, as it relates to aesthetic criticism, involves adopting a position in respect of the distinction between 'seeing' in the narrow sensory understanding of that term and seeing in the sense of 'seeing as'. The former sense relates to features which are taken to be descriptively in an artwork and the latter to those which are interpretively imputed to it. Hence, the distinctions already examined in respect of (i) internal/external evidence, (ii) descriptive/interpretive statements, and (iii) truth/plausibility arguments, find a further parallel in the context of philosophical attempts to define the nature of aesthetic perception with reference to perceptual theory as a whole.

Margolis attended, initially, to aspects of perception theory which associate the 'aesthetic attitude' with affective rather than cognitive faculties, claiming that a confusion exists over the relationship between expressive qualities of artworks and affective or emotive states that are associated with percipients' responses (pp. 191-200). These two senses may in fact coincide in cases where the

expressive quality of a given work (e.g., sadness or gaiety) serves to induce a similar feeling in an audience member. However, the conflation of the two senses (typified in the Emotionalist Theory of Art) fails to do justice to a large number of paradigm cases: for whilst it may account for instances in which the qualities expressed and the feelings evoked may in some sense be considered congruent, the same cannot be claimed for probably the great majority of cases. It is a matter of practical experience that an artist may manipulate materials (in either the pejorative or non-pejorative sense of 'manipulate') in order to produce an expressive quality which he or she does not personally feel. Similarly, percipients may quite readily recognize that a work exhibits a certain quality without their necessarily experiencing a corresponding effect (cf. critiques of the Emotionalist Theory of Art by Stolnitz, 1960, pp.158-190 & Hospers, 1955).

In his critique of perceptual theories, Margolis attempted (i) to point out that aesthetic perception involves a combination of intellectual and emotional levels of experience; (ii) to show that the term 'aesthetic attitude' (which he considered vacuous) misleadingly suggests that persons are able to achieve an intuitive understanding of artworks beyond the immediacy of direct experience; and (iii) to deny (against Arnheim, see pp.196-197) that there exist 'perceptual forces' which underlie and direct our aesthetic perceptions: for whilst there may be compelling reasons for reaching certain perceptual judgements in given cases, these are relative, not to the supposed 'innate organizational powers of the brain' (ibid.), but to powerful

influences exerted within cultural contexts. This would seem to affirm that perception in the fullest sense of the term involves a complex of factors ranging from a basic physiognomic level to a sophisticated level of cultural conditioning. Likewise, perception, as it relates to aesthetic criticism, '... need not be restricted to, or even primarily focused on, what is accessible in some minimally sensory sense' (p.195). Instead, the widest possible range of cultural factors should be seen as relevant to the perception of artworks and to the judgements that are made concerning them.

This conclusion rules out too firm a distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic terms in art criticism. It implies that metacritics should steer a middle course between characterizing aesthetic judgements in a manner that sacrifices their distinctiveness and artificially segregating them from other kinds of judgement (cf. 'the reductionist empiricism which results in a perceptually restricted range of judgements' in Chap. 4.5). Hence, a major implication of the claim that artworks are culturally emergent entities is that the distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic terms (like that between intrinsic and extrinsic evidence) can lead to an attenuated view of critical judgement that would deny (by default) the aesthetic relevance of moral, political, and otherwise ideological factors (op. cit., p.232).

In particular, the distinction between moral and aesthetic interests appears problematic. The view of writers such as Hare (1952) and Hampshire (1954) '... that moral judgements function to "guide

conduct" and that aesthetic judgements never do' (p.213) is said by Margolis to be over-stated. On the contrary, moral issues may, in certain circumstances, call for an appreciative rather than an active response on the observer's part (see p.214): for example, readers of literature may readily adopt an attitude of appreciation towards the moral choices made by fictional or historical characters without their necessarily having to be faced with the same choices in their own experience. Therefore, the consideration of moral issues need not entail an 'ought' as far as the reader is concerned. The point is a fair one, although it might be said with equal justification that to 'appreciate' the moral choice of a fictional or historical character involves at least an aspiration to act accordingly in similar circumstances.

On the other hand, it is also incorrect to insist too strongly that aesthetic judgements are, by definition, morally neutral. Critical statements, inasmuch as these fall short of expressing complete approbation of a given work, involve, at least implicitly, a recommendation about how the work might otherwise have been produced (allowing for the nature of the artistic problem and accepting the constraints which the artist has set). In such instances, it is clear that aesthetic judgements are prescriptive (accepting an extenuatory sense of 'prescriptive'), because the critic, by disclosing a (supposed) weakness in the artwork is assuming that there is room, and thus need, for improvement. Furthermore, the impossibility of segregating moral and aesthetic interests can be demonstrated by terms that jointly serve a moral and an aesthetic purpose. Hence, with

regard to judging a person's character and conduct, 'kindly,' 'discreet,' 'foul,' 'heinous,' etc, may be employed in a purely appreciative sense.

Whereas the link between moral and aesthetic judgements appears more germane to literature than art, it nevertheless serves to show that determining what is of aesthetic concern is problematic and that pursuing arguments in the classroom is thus a further means of focusing attention on conceptual issues surrounding the nature of art and how it is perceived.

## 5.6 Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to identify issues in philosophical aesthetics that reflect the contested character of philosophy as a whole (cf. Chap. 4) in order to devise a basis for metacriticism in art education. This was needed because existing art education models (Chap. 3.6) failed to accommodate the idea of aesthetic controversy as a focus for instruction. Hence, it was thought necessary, in the first instance, to explicate the conceptual links between aesthetic controversy and wider debates elsewhere in philosophy concerning the relation of perceiver and perceived.

The notion of 'standard oppositions' in philosophy - the focus of Chapter 4 - has been explored in the context of philosophical aesthetics with primary reference to Margolis's Art and Philosophy. Parallels have been drawn between the oppositional nature of philosophy as a whole, particularly in regard to ontology and

epistemology, and key aspects of controversy in aesthetics over the relation of art and criticism. At the heart of these controversies is a fundamental disagreement about the value for aesthetic purposes of extrinsic evidence. This amounts to a dispute (or grounds for a dispute) concerning the possibility, or otherwise, of defining the boundaries of artworks, that is, demarcating what is straightforwardly 'in' a work from what is interpretively imputed to it. Such disputes arise in the context of deciding where to draw the line between, for example, description and interpretation, true claims and (merely) plausible ones, and aesthetic as opposed to non-aesthetic terms. These are presented elsewhere in the thesis as a set of propositions (see Appendix III ).

The key disputes examined in this chapter have emerged as specific foci for exploring the oppositional nature of philosophy in the context of aesthetics. The linking of these levels of theory, namely, general philosophy and philosophical aesthetics (see above, Chap. 5.1), has been conducted in a manner that anticipates a need to develop metacritical strategies with reference to pedagogical theory. In this connection, exploration of the several aspects of controversy examined above has included some speculation about the likely curricular implications of adopting them as foci for art instruction. A more detailed attempt to explore the curricular implications of aesthetic controversy will be conducted in the following chapter with reference to the concept of artistic intention, which at the start of the research was identified as a representative dispute. Discussion of this concept will address issues connected with teaching aesthetic



controversy, but in greater detail and, specifically, in the light of existing metacritical strategies in areas outside art education - particularly the field of English literature studies.

## CHAPTER 6.

### INTENTION IN AESTHETICS AND LITERATURE EDUCATION

#### 6.1. Introduction

The enquiry which forms the basis for this chapter focuses on a specific issue concerning the link between art and criticism, namely, the controversy over intention (See Chap. 1.1 above for a definition of this controversy.) Intention is treated separately with a view to facilitating a discussion in depth of curricular implications. Given the association of intention with literary criticism, this involves an analysis of different kinds of theory drawn from aesthetics, literature education and art education sources. It also constitutes a shift of emphasis away from (merely) speculating about pedagogy on the basis of an analysis of philosophical aesthetics towards identifying and commenting upon existing strategies for teaching a range of critical stances.

There are two main reasons for focusing on intention. First, in the opinion of prominent aestheticians (e.g., Hospers, 1975, p.42.) it has strategic philosophical importance because it is 'representative' of fundamental controversy in aesthetics and in philosophy as a whole. The expectation is that it can be used to bring the ontological and epistemological issues of aesthetic controversy into sharper relief than was possible in Chapter 5. In this connection, it is assumed that intention is closer to what is said about art in actual criticism than is, for example, the distinction between description and

interpretation (Chap. 5.3) or the discrimination of aesthetic and non-aesthetic terms (Chap. 5.5), although direct critical speculations 'on the spot' about 'what the artist is trying to say' lead, logically speaking, to a consideration of these other, supposedly less concrete, issues. Second, not only are texts on the pros and cons of intentionalist criticism available in the field of English literature education, but this source of theory was shown in a previous study to have methodological relevance for the analytical/critical domain of art education (Rawding, 1984). The expectation is that literature education theory will aid the current research by providing a basis for developing principles and procedures for teaching metacriticism that can be applied to the art education sphere.

The current enquiry is conducted with reference to books, articles and papers on the issue of artistic intention in the theory of aesthetics, literature education and art education. As in Chapter 5, Margolis's Art and Philosophy provides a reference point for exploring different positions regarding the philosophical underpinnings of intention. The education texts referred to either relate specifically to the teaching of literary intention or, more generally, to the teaching of a range of methods in literary criticism. This dual focus represents an attempt to investigate further an issue which emerged earlier from the critical review of art education theory and practice (Chap. 3), namely, that art educators had largely failed to address the problem of how to present the multi-dimensionality of criticism to learners by means of a coherent pedagogical strategy. It is assumed that a discipline-based pedagogy ought to achieve an alignment of two kinds of theory, namely, that which relates to the content and methods of

the discipline or field of study in question, and that which relates to the principles and procedures of instruction.

Given the stated aim of proceeding in this chapter to a closer scrutiny of teaching methods, it is thought essential to consider first what is involved in combining aesthetic theory and educational theory. Moreover, it is necessary to anticipate the points at which an analysis of intention is likely to be a continuation of, and a development from, the discussion of issues in aesthetics in Chapter 5. This should involve speculation about ways in which the current shift to literature adds a new dimension to prior considerations about the nature of art and concomitant methods of criticism.

To this end, analysis of the issue of intention is preceded by a discussion of the links between ontology and critical method in regard to both literature and art. The intrinsic/extrinsic distinction in art scholarship is pivotal to this discussion. The distinction (see Chaps. 3.2 and 4.3) is between the work of theorists who stress the primacy of a direct encounter with art and those who seek to define and interpret specific works by reference to external influences on the artist. This has emerged as the central theme of aesthetic controversy over the relationship between critical statements about artworks and competing views of the perception of (artistic) reality. To prepare the ground for the analysis of intention, the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction is briefly examined in the light of perceptual theory and certain positions regarding the perception of art and literature are linked to pedagogical stances on the teaching of criticism. Subsequently, the analysis of intention in aesthetics

and literature education seeks to draw connections between ontological conceptions, methods of criticism, and teaching strategies. The overall purpose is to ascertain whether methodological alignments identified by means of this analysis can be applied to the field of art education.

## 6.2 Aesthetic Theory and Education Theory

The derivation of pedagogical strategies from the model of metacritical enquiry in aesthetics depends on achieving compatibility between aesthetic and educational theory. These two fields of theory represent separate discourses emanating from different historical circumstances; it cannot be assumed, therefore, that material existing on one level can simply be transferred intact to the other. 'Translation' rather than 'transference' might be a better term for the relationship between them. Beardsley's (1970b, p.7) notion of 'interfield illumination' is relevant to this point. His suggestion is that 'aesthetic theory' represents a potential source from which to derive both content for and methods of instruction in the arts. He maintained that this source could be tapped by reflecting on the essentially pedagogical character of art criticism and metacritical approaches to underlying theory.

First, his recommended approach reveals new aspects of content: according to Beardsley, aesthetic concepts may be '... taken over directly into instructional theory after having been clarified in aesthetics'.<sup>1</sup> In other words, they become part of 'what' is taught. (The task of clarifying aesthetic concepts is performed, initially, by the aesthetician, first for his/her personal benefit and then for an

audience of other philosophers. The educator - i.e., researcher, curriculum theorist, teacher - consults the aesthetician's writings and attempts, by derivation, to do the same for his/her own sphere.) Second, it facilitates the modelling of pedagogical method: Beardsley stated that:

'... if we (come to) understand an important aspect of our relationship to works of art, and try looking at instruction with its help, we may find that certain features of instruction become plainer or sharper from this point of view.' (ibid., emphasis added)

Hence, the content clarified by the aesthetician, and derivatively clarified by the educational theorist, can be viewed not just as a part of 'what' is taught but 'how' it is to be taught as well.

Kaelin (1989, p. 109) has also written of the need to '...merge aesthetic and pedagogical concerns...at the level of methodology' to achieve a '...single discipline.' He claimed that this can be brought about by '....relating philosophy to aesthetics and aesthetics to art experiences' in a detailed and systematic manner which reveals the interconnections between these different levels. The analysis in the following pages will seek for evidence of these interconnections in literature education texts.

#### 6.2.1. Controversy in Aesthetics and the Relevance of Literature Education Theory

It was suggested in Chapter 1.3 that the field of literature education might be an important source of theory both in respect of the controversy over intention and the contestability of aesthetics as a whole. Aestheticians in general, and Margolis in particular, discuss

the problems of intentionalist criticism chiefly in the context of literary works. (Wimsatt and Beardsley's The Intentional Fallacy, which is seminal, refers primarily to the interpretation of poetry.) The reason why 'intention' more often than not equals literary intention in the writings of aestheticians is chiefly because intentionalist criticism appeals to verbal evidence or states its case in discursive or polemical terms. As Muecke (1982, p.5) succinctly stated: 'Literature, with language as its medium, is inescapably ideational'. Moreover, after preliminary investigation it was found that the field of literature education theory was the only source of arguments for and against the teaching of intentionalist criticism (see Chap. 6.4.1).

The decision to examine literature studies was partly influenced by the fact that writers on art education have recommended doing so on the grounds that literature educators have a better understanding than art specialists of the concepts and methods of criticism and the aesthetic theories that underlie them. For example, Feldman (1973, p.53), with reference to art education in the U.S.A., maintained that 'The model of criticism in the curriculum is literature' and that '... teachers of literature are several light years ahead of us in their use of theoretical materials'. In the British context, Reid (1980, p.13) has contrasted the art teacher's lack of training in critical methods with that of '... the fully trained teacher of English who has been steeped in it'. Onions (1979, p.2) and Dyson (1981, p.20) have indicated also that English literature (and general history) are richer and more developed areas of the curriculum and that art educators have much to gain from consulting them.

### 6.2.2. Controversy in Aesthetics and the Relevance of Perceptual Theory

The point was made in Chapter 5.5 that studies in perception were an important theoretical source for exploring the links between the ontology of art and critical method. The relevance of perceptual theory to the enquiry as a whole is made apparent by the tendency of writers in this field to discuss problems of aesthetic perception in the context of both literature and fine art (e.g., Fisher, 1980). Despite significant differences between the medium of words on the one hand and the medium of visual imagery on the other, sufficient grounds exist for drawing parallels regarding the ontological status of artworks and the manner in which they are perceived. According to Fisher (ibid., p.8) literature theorists were in the forefront of a '... significant empirical revolution in aesthetics at mid-century' which led to a re-examination of the problems of perception through combining knowledge arising from experimental psychology and philosophical aesthetics. The questions raised proved relevant to '... not only the traditional epistemological issues concerning the information conveyed in perception, but also crucial ontological concerns' (ibid., p.9). Arnheim (1980, p.169) also referred to the emergence of a '... a broad definition of perception (which) allows us to realize that the quality of perceptual dynamics is shared by all mental happenings': i.e., those perceived imaginatively (as in the case of literary works) as well as those perceived sensuously, as in the cases of painting and music (art forms which rely on one or more of the five senses as a direct means of expression or production) (cf. Mitias, 1982, p.42).



Drawing parallels between, on the one hand, the perception of literary works and, on the other, the perception of visual art forms assumes that the 'crucial ontological concerns' noted by Fisher (op. cit.) are in some sense common to literature and art. Recognition of common concerns does not mean ignoring the fact that literature and art are ontologically distinct media, as in Goodman's (1976, p.113 f) distinction between allographic and autographic arts, nor that the two fields of criticism are subtly different on that account. Rather, parallels between literary and art criticism are justifiable, in this researcher's opinion, on the grounds that the controversy over intention raises questions about the ontological status of artworks in both fields. Hence, despite differences between, on the one hand, the medium of language and, on the other, the 'medium' of visual imagery, each field of criticism exhibits a range of 'critical modes' (Booth, 1979, Chap. 1), or schools of criticism, which may be discriminated in terms of the relative importance attached to 'intrinsic' as opposed to 'extrinsic' evidence (or vice versa) in given cases. This distinction was earlier described as the central underpinning of controversy in aesthetics (Chap. 6.1). The point of disagreement, tacit or otherwise, concerns the problem of determining the boundaries of artworks (see Appendix III, esp. Proposition 3). The ontological presuppositions of the different critical modes lead to different kinds of approaches to criticism: ontology and critical method, the 'what' and the 'how' of criticism, are thus inseparably linked.

If the ontological status of works of literature and art is a matter of dispute in aesthetic theory, epistemological concerns, namely, the derivation of knowledge about such works and the establishment of

criteria for validating critical claims, are equally problematic. Problems associated with the perception of artworks are essentially problems in which considerations of ontology and epistemology converge.

#### 6.2.3. The 'Intrinsic/Extrinsic' Polarity: Pedagogical Implications

The connection between ontological/epistemological considerations and critical methods, that is, between the beliefs (tacit or otherwise) of critics and their characteristic actions, has implications for the teaching of criticism. This connection has been described (Miller, 1984) in terms of a polarity of pedagogical strategies:

... an artwork does not primarily refer to a meaning 'out there' in the world but rather presents its import 'in here' within its own dimension ... A teacher who holds this point of view concerning artistic meaning will want to teach artworks as self-subsistent objects of attention rather than dependent objects of reference. (p.96)

The implication for teaching criticism is that teachers ought to be committed, on ideological grounds, to one or other of these positions. But is this the only choice available, or is there an alternative possibility? (The question is decisive, for in teaching metacriticism, or the 'criticism of criticism', it is of first importance to determine the range of critical options.) In seeking to answer this question, attention will be directed first to the fields of literature studies and perceptual theory in a general sense for reasons already stated; this will be followed by a discussion of the controversy over intention as a pedagogical focus.

According to Booth (op cit., p.237), literary criticism over the past four decades has been marked by a '... polemical opposition between intrinsic questions and extrinsic questions' which has revealed itself most noticeably and typically in the controversy over artistic intention. Nevertheless, Booth warned against a too willing acceptance of 'the metaphor of inside-versus-outside' (ibid.) on the grounds that it fails to do justice to the complexity and variety of literary works and the correspondingly varied ways in which readers encounter them.

For example, Abrams (1953), in what has remained a classic formulation of literary theory, distinguished between, on the one hand, objective theories of criticism which view the work as a 'heterocosm', (i.e., the sole source of critical attention) and, on the other, three categories of theory which view the artwork as dependent on an 'external' point of reference: namely, the Universe (as in mimetic theories), the Audience (as in pragmatic theories) and the Artist (as in Expressive theories). Booth (op cit., pp.54-57), in his comments on Abrams's scheme, expanded his Audience and Artist categories to include 'response' or rhetorical' criticism and 'biographical' criticism, respectively; moreover, he added a fourth category: 'historical' or 'scholarly' criticism in which the work is interpreted as a sign or product of socio-political forces.

A rather different kind of 'opposition' has emerged in recent literature education theory in the shape of what Bradbury (Weldhen, 1986) has called 'two essential versions of English studies' namely, 'the moral/humanistic' (or Leavisite tradition) and 'the linguistic'

(or structuralist and post-structuralist traditions). These two 'versions' do not neatly parallel the intrinsic/extrinsic opposition in art and literature identified by Miller (op cit.). For example, structuralist methodology is noted for 'bracketing' the text from exterior considerations, but its overall project can hardly be characterized as indifferent to the work's socio-political context (Eagleton, 1983, Chap. 3).

Briefly, literary criticism encompasses a plurality of critical modes. Each mode presupposes a particular view of the ontological status of the literary work, that is, 'what sort of thing' (it) '"really" is' (ibid., p.54). The difficulties attending the attempt to sort critical modes on an internal/external axis are linked to the problem of fixing the boundaries of works of literature and art. For this reason Margolis (1975, p.88) viewed the internal/external issue underlying critical practice to be conceptual rather than ideological. The problem of distinguishing that which is descriptively present in a work from that which is interpretively imputed to it (see above, Chap. 5.3) led him to conclude that 'diverse schools of criticism' cannot help partaking to some degree of both internal and external arguments, despite their ideological commitments.

The conceptual difficulties associated with the intrinsic/extrinsic polarity and its application to literature also invite comparison with the 'crucial ontological concerns' (Fisher, op cit.) raised by perceptual theory (see Chap. 6.3.2). Hagen (1980), for example, distinguished between ecological theories in which perception is viewed as synonymous with sensation and conventionalist theories which

account for the relationship between physical reality and ways of picturing or imaging in terms of a '... socially shared but arbitrary component code' (ibid., p.108). On the other hand, Machamer (1980, p.17) who first insisted that 'Theories of art or art criticism presuppose a theory of perception', identified three theoretical alignments. He contrasted 'theories that emphasize what is in the work of art' (ibid., p.14, emphasis added) with two kinds of extrinsic theory: first, those that concentrate on the effect which works produce in audience members and, second, those that emphasize what the spectator (or, by attribution, the artist) contributes to the work '... over and above what is literally in the work itself' (ibid.).

His scheme may be summarized as follows:

	<u>Theories of Perception</u>	<u>Theories of Art/Criticism</u>
Intrinsic	Direct, information-based ( 'Stimulus' variable)	Formal
	Behaviourist ( 'Response' variable)	Spectator affect
Extrinsic	Cognitivist/Constructivist ( 'Organism' variable)	Beholder's share (Audience-based) (Artist-based)

Machamer's phrase 'over and above what is literally in the work itself' accurately conveys the point of conflict between the different schools of perceptual theory: namely, that of determining the 'object' of perception. Margolis's (1980c) position with regard to orientations in perceptual theory was to steer a middle course between the conventionalist (Cognitivist/Constructivist) position of Goodman and the ecological (Direct Information-based) position of Gibson.

Against the former, he maintained that '...there is some biological, nonconventional disposition underlying all cultural conventions' (ibid., p.228, emphasis in orig.). Against the latter, he affirmed that aesthetic perception, as in the case of ordinary perception, is dependent on a cognizing subject having learned the conventions and underlying rules for applying these conventions to the interpretation of artworks.

The implication of the position of Margolis (and others) is that Miller's (op cit.) characterization of the teaching of art criticism as an ideological choice between 'internal' or 'external' approaches is overstated. Although the 'internal/external' polarity is helpful as a pedagogical focus in that it fixes theoretical extremes, this researcher believes that it needs to be carefully qualified before it can serve as a representative focus for the teaching of metacritical enquiry in art education.

### 6.3 Controversy over Intention in Aesthetics

Interpreting an artwork with reference to its producer's intentions implies a number of critical strategies. These include, (i) speculating about the artist's psychological state in the light of evidence arising from both an analysis of the work itself and general biographical information, (ii) deducing artistic meaning in terms of the cultural provenance within which the work was produced, (iii) drawing conclusions on the basis of direct statements made by an artist with regard to the work, and (iv) focusing on the work itself as a functional whole which exhibits intentional properties that

transcend the artist's control. As noted in Chapter 1.1, the question of the legitimacy of intentionalist criticism in its various manifestations has, '...prompted the principal controversy in the mid-20th century' in the field of philosophical aesthetics. (Hospers, op.cit.).

Margolis's analysis of the controversy over intention is a logical extension of his more fundamental analysis of the ontological status of artworks. Given his claim that '...one's account of the nature of criticism and of the nature of an artwork is conceptually linked in the most intimate way' (1980a, p.27), divergent strategies, such as those listed above, can be seen to reflect equally divergent philosophical stances over the link between human knowledge and the nature of perceived reality. This theoretical divergence was identified earlier (Chap. 4) in respect of the notion of 'standard oppositions' and subsequently reiterated in the context of aesthetic controversy with particular reference to perceptual theory (Chap. 5; cf. Chaps. 6.2.2 & 6.2.3). According to Nathan (1982), intentionalist criticism is markedly split between those for and those opposed to the use of intention as a standard for interpreting works of literature and art:

Proponents of intentionalism claim that information about the artist's motivations and intentions in creating a work of art is relevant to a proper understanding and appraisal of the work. Anti-intentionalists, on the other hand, deny that facts about the particular (and personal) histories of works are relevant to correct art-critical analyses of the works. (p.245).

This opposition represents a difference in attitude regarding the aesthetic relevance of that which is deemed to be 'external' to the

artwork. Intentionalists, so-called, readily accommodate such evidence, whereas anti-intentionalists emphasize the 'autonomy' of the artwork and consider 'the complete text' to be '...the sole source of evidence in interpretation' (ibid.). The point of disagreement between the two positions represents more than simply a difference of opinion about the relevance of 'external' evidence. Rather, it hinges on the question of whether it is possible clearly to demarcate the 'internal' from the 'external' features of the artwork. Intentionalists, if they are consistent, can only view the internal/external dichotomy as a problematic concept; whereas anti-intentionalists, by discounting evidence 'from outside the work', are thereby committed to viewing the artwork as a self-subsistent object of critical attention.<sup>2</sup>

However, the expectation arising from the analysis of theoretical oppositions in the current research (reductive empiricism/relativism, materialism/idealism, ecological/conventionalist theories of perception) is that such fundamental disagreements give rise to sophisticated, middle-ground positions brought about by attempts to resolve, or rather re-cast, the conceptual problems involved. Margolis's analysis of intention fulfils this expectation. Underlying his critique of theories is his view of artworks as 'culturally emergent entities', which means that '...in effect, artworks possess attributes essential to their ontic analysis and aesthetic appreciation that are themselves not perceptually accessible' (1980b., p.4). His emphasis on the cultural provenance of art and criticism represents a challenge to the dominant 'empiricist' strain of Anglo-American aesthetics in which the ontology of art is conceived



exclusively in terms of sensory or perceptual properties and critical method as, concomitantly, the formal analysis of such properties. In contrast to 'empiricist' aesthetics, Margolis argued that to concede the culturally emergent character of artworks is to admit the possible aesthetic relevance of all types of information concerning them. Therefore, in the context of aesthetic judgment, no type of evidence should be antecedently discounted.

In Chapter 4.4.1 above, the conclusion was reached that empiricist aesthetics in the analytical tradition leads to reductive ontologies of the artwork because it is based on an inadequate view of the observer/critic as a relatively detached agent who is able to make accurate, objective representations of (artistic) reality. By contrast, the anti-foundationalism of Continental aesthetics was said to problematize the subject/object relationship through stressing that criticism is a form of dialogue in which perceiver and perceived are mutually engaged. This contrast is brought out by challenging the empiricist aesthetics of Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954). These two writers attempted to legitimize the use of intentionalist arguments by rescuing the concept of intention from the excesses of proponents and opponents alike. To this end, they sought to discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate uses of intention by distinguishing between three types of evidence which are used in criticism to determine the meaning of a text (their thesis is presented primarily in the context of literature). They claim that only two types of evidence (1 and 3 in their scheme of things) are admissible: type 1 designates the internal evidence of a work, i.e., its perceptual properties (technical, formal, expressive, etc.) mediated through

public conventions relating to the 'language' of art; type 3 designates external evidence arising from the tradition of ideas and practices in which the artist stands. Type 3 evidence is not specific to actual artworks: it restricts the critic to inferential reasoning about an artist's intended meaning in given cases and is, therefore, of indirect relevance.<sup>3</sup>

A third type of evidence (type 2) is deemed by Wimsatt and Beardsley to be inadmissible. This type which they describe as 'external' and 'private or idiosyncratic' (p.353), is biographical in character but, in contrast to type 3, has a direct bearing on the artist's purposes in respect of particular works. Such evidence usually 'consists of revelations (in journals...letters or reported conversations)...' (ibid.) which plainly disclose information either about the reasons underlying a given work or the methods employed in its production. In the light of these distinctions, Wimsatt and Beardsley contrast two very different approaches to the task of criticism:

...a critic who is concerned with evidence of type (1) and moderately with that of type (3) will in the long run produce a different sort of comment from that of the critic who is concerned with (2) and with (3) where it shades into (2). (ibid.)

They conclude that critics who favour the latter approach are apt to commit the Intentional Fallacy: that is, to emphasize unduly the dependability of direct biographical evidence and to assert its superiority over other considerations.

The crux of the Intentional Fallacy debate was well summed up by Margolis:

It is possible that the only quarrelsome use of the artist's intention concerns appealing to independent evidence of his intention in order to reduce the number of otherwise eligible interpretations. (p.170, emphases in orig.).

The issue is not that direct biographical evidence may be used to corroborate an existing line of enquiry (a legitimate usage according to Wimsatt and Beardsley), but that it may be used to initiate a line of enquiry in situations where the observer/critic has reached an impasse or is unable even to take the first step. Once it is conceded that the effect of direct biographical evidence is to channel the critic's perceptions, then it becomes difficult to see how such information can be classed as 'outside' the work:

If we construe artworks as culturally and historically emergent phenomena, then it is quite impossible to specify the 'internal' features of a work without attention to the 'external' culture which supplies the very context in which an artwork exists. (ibid., p.175).

The notion of 'cultural emergence' presupposes that artworks have non-perceptible, that is to say 'intentional' properties. But what does this expanded sense of intentional imply for the conduct of criticism? And how can this assist the classroom teacher when confronting complex works of literature or art? It is helpful at this point to seek answers to the first question that might anticipate how to answer the second. The notion of 'cultural emergence' and its bearing on metacritical enquiry was speculated on in the previous chapter; in this respect, the controversy over intention can now be seen as a

particularly apt focus for exploring '...fundamental philosophical questions about meaning and objectivity' (see Chap. 5.2).

In the first place, the notion of author/artist is rendered problematic by what Nicholson (1984, pp. 223-225) has called the 'problem of access' to intentional states, that is, '...either through the text at hand or otherwise'. His argument is that the author/artist's consciousness is not directly accessible; rather, interpretation in art and literature is a '...textual procedure, not a psychological one' and is attainable only in and through the medium of language (p.255). This problem of distinguishing the author/artist over against the tradition in which he or she stands is highlighted by Margolis's discussion of theory emanating from the hermeneutical tradition wherein he cited Dilthey's distinction between the '...psychological and hermeneutic conceptions of intentions' as providing a useful analogue of the distinction already noted in respect of, on the one hand, biographical evidence about the artist's purpose in producing a given work and, on the other, that which is relevant in an indirect sense (op cit. p. 175). The 'hermeneutic' conception of intentions entails that cultural phenomena (artworks, human actions, institutions, etc.) embody the '...public intentional structures of a historical community' (ibid.) and are therefore susceptible of interpretation insofar as these exhibit such publicly discernible properties. The 'psychological' conception of intentions refers instead to '...putatively private, inchoate, or inaccessible psychological states of particular persons' (ibid.). However, direct biographical evidence of an artist's intention (for example, a letter to a friend explaining why a specific work had been produced) is

hardly 'inaccessible' or 'utterly private'. Such disclosures ensure that private feelings and motives are brought into the public domain. In brief, it is impossible for an individual to engage in private (i.e., non-communicable) language: the idea is contradictory; moreover, all forms of biographical evidence are culturally defined and thus relevant for aesthetic purposes. (These points do not obviate the fact that the personally stated intentions of an artist may actually mislead a critic in any number of ways.) The value of the distinction between the hermeneutic and psychological conceptions of intention is that it brings the problem of defining the author/artist to critical attention. The implication for method is that the problematic identity of the author/artist could be demonstrated by, for example, comparing strategies for interpreting different kinds of evidence of intention (Nicholson, op. cit. esp. p.223). The different senses of author/artist that underlie these strategies raise questions about human consciousness in relation to what we know and what we see. The problem of access to intentions could be demonstrated by, for example, comparing the task of interpreting an undocumented work by an anonymous author/artist with a well-documented work.

The linking of 'cultural emergence' with 'intentional' problematizes not only the concepts 'artwork' and 'author/artist', but also that of the 'reader/critic'. The point is that the intentions of the latter are interpretively significant. Here there is a different emphasis to the empiricism that assumes the reader/critic to be a relatively neutral agent who is able to objectify (artistic) reality and make analytically dependable judgments. The difference is between a

restricted view of intention as a state of consciousness embodied in a particular work, and a pervasive view in which individual intentions are causally related to a 'network' of socially determined beliefs and volitions to which all persons, including author/artists and reader/critics, participate (Searle, 1983, p.65f.). In this connection, Wartofsky (1980) has affirmed the need to take full account of the determinative influence of the observer/critic's values and expectations when he stated that

...the human eye is not a recording camera, but part of a live creature whose seeing is shot through with intentionalities. (p.35).

Moreover, Booth (op cit.) has pointed out that a dialogical approach to textual criticism

...supposes a text that exists, when interpreted, at least as much in the reader and the reader's culture as in the author and the author's culture, and it also supposes a reader who, as he interprets, is at least as much in the text and in the author's culture as in his own culture. (p.237, emphases in orig.).

The dynamic interplay of artwork (text), artist (author) and critic (reader) identified by these writers suggests that the search for 'truth' that typifies interpretation should include reflexivity of thought on the critic's part regarding the consciousness shaping implications of his or her own conceptual categories. Searle (op. cit., p.54f) has supplied some intriguing examples of the interrelation of beliefs and perceptual 'objects' in respect of intention.

In summary, it is concluded that consideration of the controversy over the aesthetic relevance of the artist's intentions must be set in the context of the more fundamental debate in philosophy over the relation of knowledge, language and perception involved in theories of human intentionality (Searle, op. cit.). It remains now to consider the kinds of strategies employed in English literature education with regard to intention. Attention will be paid to links between types of interpretive evidence, methods of approach, and the ontological/epistemological presuppositions that underlie such approaches.

#### 6.4. Controversy over Intention and Teaching Literature

A search of relevant texts revealed that discussion of the concept of intention by educational theorists is largely confined to the field of English literature. A number of studies have explored ways in which the concept of intention may be used as a focus for literary instruction (Neumeyer, 1970; Gage, 1978; Wilson, 1981 contra Gribble, 1981); others have included it in a wider discussion of the teaching of literary criticism (Crosman, 1975; Ruthven, 1979; Schafer, 1979; Rodway, 1982; de Beaugrande, 1984). Neumeyer (op. cit.), in particular, recognized that diverse views of the concept of intention are held by teachers of literature and that these reflect equally diverse views concerning the ontological status of the literary work:

The kinds of questions one asks of or about a work of literature depend on one's assumptions about the matter of intention or, stated more dramatically, they depend on one's notions of the mode of existence of a work of literature. So does the sort of classroom one conducts. So does the textbook one uses. (p.336)

The conclusions he reached with respect to pedagogy will be examined below in the light of comments already made concerning the limitations of the intrinsic/extrinsic polarity as a focus for metacriticism.

Neumeyer identified three broad approaches to teaching criticism arising from his discussion of intention. First, he identified an extreme anti-intentionalist approach in which the teacher eschews formal instruction and its main objective, the discovery of a (putatively) correct, or preferred, reading. This type of 'teacher' seeks to expose learners to literature by involving them in, for example, free-wheeling group discussions in which subjective experience takes precedence over argumentation based on evidence. Central to this approach is the assumption that a work's meaning can never be fully comprehended by any one interpreter; neither can that which is comprehended be adequately expressed in words. Such teaching would consider the search for intended meaning to be a futile one and could hardly be expected to use the concept of intention at all. Second, Neumeyer identified a more moderate anti-intentionalist approach which views the text as a self-contained entity that encompasses all data relevant for interpretation. This approach, which is associated with the position of the Chicago New Critics (the tradition to which Wimsatt and Beardsley belong), restricts the search for literary meaning to a close analytical scrutiny of 'the words on the page' and discounts any attempt to infer about an author's intentions on the basis of extra-textual material, for example, biographical evidence. Even to speculate about intention on the basis of textual evidence misses the point because this school of thought places emphasis not on the author but on the work itself as an entity



that transcends even the author's control. The appropriate strategy in this case is to ask 'how' and not 'what' a text means. Hence, in teaching of this type, the concept of intention is accorded at best only a limited usefulness; limited that is by adherence to the doctrine of textual autonomy. A third approach, which Neumeyer described as the dominant one in English literature education, accepts that '... all sorts of information outside the work are part of the work, making it what it is' (ibid., p.336). He specified three kinds of outside information: background data on the broad socio-historical context in which a work was produced, psychological speculation about an author's state of mind at the time of production including an assessment of artistic 'sincerity', and explanations of all references in a work (usually footnotes in textbooks) including an attempted decoding of its ambivalences and allusions.

Neumeyer admitted that the three approaches he identified may overlap to some extent in practical criticism. He declined to take sides on the intentionalist issue and pointed out the drawbacks for those who do. Anti-intentionalists, whether extreme or moderate, were said to be far too sanguine about defining what is 'outside' the artwork. He gave examples to show that 'pure' readings, namely, those uncontaminated by background knowledge, are unattainable. A further criticism of anti-intentionalist approaches to the teaching of literature was proposed by Gage, (op cit.) who pointed out that a clear contradiction exists in current practice between, on the one hand, teaching the activity of reading on the assumption that authorial intent cannot be known, and, on the other, teaching the activity of essay writing which, because it is essentially rhetorical,

requires that students' own intentions be made clear. Hence intention is a necessary point of reference for one who engages in the process of composition. Those who pursue an anti-intentionalist line are also open to the charge which Kelly (1986, pp.116-121) levelled at the 'pedagogic partisanship' of teachers who '... fail to inform their students about the complexity and diversity of perspectives on relevant issues'. Such a 'one-sided presentation' has, he suggested, the effect of curtailing intellectual freedom and weakening the learners' ability to choose wisely in matters of controversy. It springs from the belief that either a particular issue (in this case, intention) is unproblematic, or that it is one's duty vigorously to oppose what one sees as an erroneous viewpoint.

The difficulties associated with anti-intentionalist approaches to teaching criticism are coextensive with those which Margolis examined at the level of aesthetic theory (see above Chap. 6.3). The concept of artistic intention is, as Margolis and Neumeyer separately indicated, a paradigm instance of the relationship of ontology and critical method. Exploring the concept across the fields of aesthetic and educational theory brings to the fore the necessity of modelling a pedagogy of art criticism on the functions of both the critic and the aesthetician. According to Margolis, professional critics are often ignorant or neglectful of philosophical insights; however, in view of the logical interdependence of these two functions the case becomes a compelling one for ensuring that they are treated in practice as complementary aspects of art experience in the analytical/critical domain. MacGregor (1971), Ecker (1973), and Hamblen (1985, 1987) among others in the field of art education in the U.S.A. have argued

in this way as have a number of educators in the field of English studies (e.g., Ruthven 1979, Schafer 1979, Rodway 1982, Eaton 1984). A major point arising from these studies is that not only the artwork but also the process of understanding the artwork is a legitimate, indeed necessary, object of enquiry.

It remains to consider the third approach to the teaching of criticism which Neumeyer identified, namely, that of the intentionalist who seeks out all manner of information beyond that conveyed by the immediate impact of the artwork. As indicated above, the Intentional Fallacy debate calls into question the view that outside information, especially the direct biographical kind, is absolutely essential if interpretation is to succeed. However, as Margolis's analysis makes clear, intentionalism can take different forms: hence a willingness to seek out all manner of outside information need not necessarily imply indiscriminate acceptance. Neumeyer first took issue with the unthinking, unbridled intentionalism of certain authors of English literature textbooks who operate on the assumption that '... anything that may be hooked, pasted, wired, or footnoted onto a work is relevant, appropriate, and to be taken in by the student if the work is to be "learned"' (op cit., p.354). Such information-mongering encourages a sterile, bookish, second-hand knowledge of literature; it may indeed nullify the potential which certain complex works (e.g., Kafka's The Castle) possess of challenging preconceptions and deepening self-awareness on the reader's part. Neumeyer's disquiet finds an apt parallel in the shape of Kleinbauer's (1971) verdict on 'extrinsic' methods in the history of art, namely, those which attend to external data and utilize the paradigms and techniques of social

science for art historical research (cf. Chap. 3.2.). Whilst conceding that extrinsic approaches may provide useful and sometimes illuminating contributions to an overall understanding of art, he insisted that such methods can only yield partial interpretations and are thus '... unable to provide satisfactory explanations for the inherent formal qualities, or style (in the narrow sense), of works of art' (ibid., p.81).

Reference to extrinsic methods in art scholarship brings forward the question of how art criticism relates to art history from the standpoint of method. The dominant emphasis in art teaching is on the history of art whereas, in literary studies, the dominant emphasis is on criticism. Kleinbauer's view that the best art scholarship is that which achieves a synthesis of the results of both intrinsic and extrinsic methods underlines the perennial problem faced alike by teachers of literature and the history of art, namely, that of deciding on the balance to be struck between breadth and specificity of treatment when studying artworks in the classroom (Alexander, 1980; Lubbock, 1984; Univ. of Essex, 1985). This problem is highlighted, though not relieved, by the recent tendency among art educators in the U.K. to attack what they see as the narrow parochialism and conservatism of traditional art history and to advocate instead both the development of critical thinking after the example of English studies and the introduction of materials to enable artworks to be placed in their broadest cultural context (Dyson, 1981, 1984; Lubbock, 1983, 1984; Univ. of Essex, 1985; Brazier, 1985; Taylor, 1986). It is stated that the problem is not relieved, because the term 'context' in use is massively vague and often little more than a 'catch-all' for

aspects of theory and practice that do not fit a strictly formalist aesthetic. To study art in context adequately is to have grasped beforehand the complex nature of theory bearing on the concept of culture. For example, it involves taking account of different theoretical positions regarding the interaction of art and culture. Is the former determinately shaped by the latter, or is a two-way process involved in which artworks challenge and even subvert prevailing norms?<sup>4</sup> The upshot of this is that the teaching of art in context requires the teacher to make choices and these choices are only possible if the teacher is well informed.

Whilst extreme forms of intentionalism in literature and art lead to an over-reliance on auxiliary data, a more balanced approach is possible in which, for example, students might first attempt to experience a work on its own terms; then in the light of their impressions they might generate hypotheses about the original intention of the author/artist; finally, they could seek beyond their first direct impressions for data which either confirm or disconfirm their hypotheses (Schafer, op cit.; Chapman, 1978, pp.88-90).

As in the case of extreme intentionalism, a more balanced approach would show a readiness to accept evidence irrespective of source; but, unlike the extreme version, it would not give priority to direct, independent statements made by the author/artist, nor would its first instinct be to look in that direction. It would not, however, be averse to using such material if it helps to corroborate, and even in some cases to initiate, a promising line of enquiry. A more balanced approach to intentionalist criticism, such as that advocated by

Neumeyer in respect of literature, is thus a practical consequence of Margolis's repudiation of the internal/external dichotomy of traditional aesthetics.

In this chapter, certain implications of the concept of intention for the teaching of literature have been explored with the needs of art education in mind. However, linking the teaching of literary criticism with the teaching of art criticism is not without its problems. Neumeyer stated that the main characteristic of literature, as opposed to other arts, is that the author '... assumes a persona', which means '... it is often his intention to speak with a voice other than his daily, identifiable one' (p.357, emphasis in orig.). Does not this statement and the paucity of art educational discussion of intention indicate its unsuitability as a standard for interpreting and evaluating the visual arts? Not necessarily. It is clear that important differences exist between literature and art which must be taken into account in any attempt to apply the principles and procedures of an education in the former to an education in the latter. Nevertheless, Margolis's critique of theory is made with reference to the arts generally, despite his emphasis on literary intention; and Neumeyer's comments on the literary artist's persona invite comparisons with certain aspects of the visual arts in which the appeal to intention seems particularly apt, for example, narrative art, irony and satire, and art forgeries. It is this researcher's view, however, that the concept of intention, as examined in this chapter, can support critical and metacritical enquiry in art education beyond a limited range of artworks that are comparable in some sense with literature.

The chief implication arising from Neumeyer's discussion of the pros and cons of intentionalist criticism is that the stances he identified are not merely alternative methods of literary criticism, but are representative of divergent conceptions of the literary work which, in turn, spring from divergent philosophical positions concerning the relationship of knowledge, language and perception. The term 'stance' here does not necessarily imply that all teachers of literature are ideologically committed in one direction or another; nor does the term 'philosophical position' necessarily imply that such individuals have a well-developed understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of their practice. Viewed collectively, the different stances identified by Neumeyer reveal the problematic relationship of literature and criticism. His repudiation of extreme forms of intentionalism and anti-intentionalism invites comparison with Margolis's repudiation of the intrinsic/extrinsic polarization of aesthetic criticism as a whole. His discussion of more moderate versions of intentionalism and anti-intentionalism suggests that defining the nature and limits of the artwork, literary or otherwise, is an important first step in seeking to understand the critical stances that underlie critical interpretations and evaluations in given cases. In brief, the ideas of Neumeyer and others examined in this chapter strongly indicate that the controversy over intention is, potentially, the key focus for teaching metacriticism in literature (and, by implication, art) education.

It was earlier posited that literature studies would, through a process of 'interfield illumination', assist clarification of the link between content in aesthetics and principles of teaching

metacriticism, (Chap. 6.2). In the event, the help gained from this source was found to be limited; for whilst Neumeyer's seminal study of competing stances proved highly relevant to the teaching of individual approaches to criticism, his discussion of 'pedagogical' implications was conducted procedurally rather than in terms of instructional principles relative to broader educational aims. His discussion implied that 'taking sides' on intentionalism is to be avoided by teachers; but this begs the question: What basis exists in educational theory for teaching about the respective values of different sides of a given controversy? It has been argued in this chapter that teaching about controversy in aesthetics is synonymous with teaching metacriticism and is, therefore, decidedly pluralistic. However, in the light of Beardsley's (op. cit.) statement that aesthetic theory represents a potential source from which to derive both content for and methods of instruction in the arts, there is a need to clarify what kind of pedagogical pluralism is implied by the controversy over intention.

#### 6.5. Summary

This comparison of literature and art education was conducted with a view not merely to exploring the curricular implications of teaching critical controversies, such as that prompted by intention, but also to discovering principles in literature education for combining metacritical content with instructional theory. In this connection, the analysis revealed little attempt on the part of Neumeyer, or other writers consulted, to convert their understanding of intention at the level of literary theory into anything more than procedural commonsense at the level of instruction. Although the key theorist



Neumeyer (see Chap. 6.4) usefully identified various critical stances associated with intention, his discussion of implications tended to bypass educational theory; in brief, his pedagogy was practically rather than theoretically weighted. What appeared to be missing was any attempt to explore the connections between diverse critical stances and equally diverse stances in the field of education theory.

It was posited in Chapter 6.2 that a pedagogy of criticism depends on achieving compatibility between particular stances in respect of aesthetic and instructional theory, whereas a pedagogy of metacriticism depends on achieving a rationale for teaching a range of critical stances. However, the analysis of literature education theory has focused on pedagogical implications of the controversy over intention as representative of controversy in aesthetics. In so doing, it revealed that the teaching of metacriticism requires a rationale not merely for presenting a range of critical stances to learners, but for presenting them in such a way that the respective values of different stances are also made a focus for instruction. In the absence of a rationale for metacriticism in English literature education, the following chapter will explore the pedagogical basis in general education theory for teaching a range of controversial issues.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONTROVERSY IN GENERAL EDUCATION THEORY

#### 7.1 Introduction

The analysis of aesthetic theory and literature education theory reported in the previous chapter constituted an attempt to explore pedagogical implications of the different ontological viewpoints underlying aesthetic controversy. This focused on a prime example of such controversy, namely, the issue of artistic intention.

Earlier analyses of aesthetics in relation to general philosophy (Chaps. 4 & 5) had revealed that controversies relevant to metacriticism are essentially concerned with the ontological problem of demarcating the boundaries of artworks and distinguishing internal from external evidence. A range of positions bounded by the extremes of reductionism and relativism (Chap. 4) was found to characterize general philosophy and aesthetics and to imply certain methodological stances for art criticism over issues such as the link between description and interpretation (Chap. 5). Artistic intention was chosen as an exploratory focus (Chap. 6) because in the opinion of prominent aestheticians (e.g. Hospers, 1975, p.42) it is a fundamental issue representative of disputes elsewhere in aesthetics and in philosophy as a whole. Also, a precedent was found for teaching about intention in an established field of pedagogy, namely, English literature. The expectation was that the principles and procedures of intentionalist criticism would help to inform the current research

effort to formulate a pedagogy of metacriticism in art education. Subsequent investigation revealed that methodological stances in aesthetic criticism (Chap. 6) are reflected in divergent approaches to literary intention. Nevertheless, literature education sources provided little help regarding the development of a general strategy for critically comparing and contrasting divergent approaches in the classroom.

The enquiry into intention reported in Chapter 6 was an attempt to discover a basis for co-ordinating aesthetic theory and (art) education theory. The co-ordination of aesthetic and pedagogical concerns also characterizes the enquiry on which the present chapter is based, but with an important difference. Whereas in the previous chapter a particular controversy was examined with reference to a particular field of pedagogy, the present enquiry focuses on the concept of 'controversy' as it applies to the content of teaching across the curriculum. It is thus assumed that, from an art education standpoint, pedagogical principles associated with teaching controversial issues per se are of direct relevance to teaching about controversy in the field of aesthetics.

The present enquiry has three main concerns. First, an attempt is made to explore further the pedagogical potential of aesthetic controversy by comparing insights gained from the study of art and literature education theory reported in Chapters 3 and 6 with recent texts in which the teaching of controversy is a primary focus of instruction, namely, in humanities and social studies education. The textual materials consulted are mainly journal articles and include

two influential anthologies on controversial issues across the curriculum (Stradling, Noctor & Baines, 1984; Wellington, 1986). Second, the enquiry aims to ascertain what is involved when teachers translate discipline-based knowledge into pedagogical content and methods. To this end, books and articles on the epistemological foundations of the curriculum are consulted. Third, an attempt is made to synthesize insights drawn from this and previous analyses in order to define a 'pedagogy of metacriticism', not only in terms of an alignment of aesthetic content and instructional methods, but also with reference to the role and character of the teacher.

## 7.2 Distinction between Subject-based and Community-based Controversy

The previous analyses of art education and literature education theory located only one study (Efland, 1979) which had sought to establish a range of alignments between separate fields of theory (in this case, psychology). Efland aligned Abrams's four categories of aesthetic criticism (see Chap. 6.3.3) with four orientations in psychological theory (Behaviourist, Cognitive, Psychoanalytic, Gestalt) and linked these pairings with four 'conceptions of teaching in the arts'. His study demonstrates that methodological consistency can be achieved across fields of theory and through into practice; indeed it supplies, unwittingly, an example of what it might mean to implement Beardsley's notion of 'interfield illumination' (see Chap. 6.2).

At the beginning of this enquiry into general educational theory, it is proposed that an alignment of stances on both intentionalist criticism and art instruction would ensure the basis for a consistent pedagogy of criticism. However, the achievement of a consistent

pedagogy of meta-criticism depends on an extra dimension of theorizing: namely, the alignment of (some form of) critical pluralism with a compatible theory of education. The analyses of intention by Neumeyer and other literature education theorists reported in the previous chapter stopped short of providing the basis for a pedagogy of metacriticism, precisely because they did not conceive of the possibility that the controversy over intention (not just the alternative stances for and against intentionalist criticism) could constitute a focus for instruction. This is not a matter of 'splitting hairs': a justification is required for teaching about the radical alternatives of criticism. To neglect this is to risk a charge of incoherence.

Given the apparent lack of material on intention as a focus for controversy, the decision was taken that an attempt should be made to extrapolate pedagogical implications from an analysis of the teaching of controversial issues found in general curriculum theorizing. Education theorists who have explored the curricular implications of controversial material were found to distinguish between, on the one hand, controversy that is grounded in the distinctive subject matter and enquiry methods of particular disciplines, and, on the other, controversy connected with matters of widespread public concern (e.g., Stenhouse, 1970; Stradling, 1984a, 1984b; Bridges, 1986). The distinction is between 'subject-based' and 'broader community-based' controversy, respectively. According to Stradling:

Virtually all school subjects and disciplines have their controversial issues and unresolved questions but, by and large, these are academic disputes which do not pose serious problems for the specialist teacher. The controversies which do tend to be problematic are those issues on which our society is clearly divided and significant groups within society advocate

conflicting explanations or solutions based on alternative values. (1984a, p.3, emphases added)

'Broader community-based' controversy is characteristically located in the public domain; it is emotionally charged and politically sensitive. Typical examples in this category are the nine 'themes' originally chosen for Stenhouse's Humanities Curriculum Project: war, education, the family, relations between the sexes, people and work, poverty, living in cities, law and order, and race relations (Stenhouse, 1970). On the other hand, 'subject-based' controversy is low-key, specialized, and socially restricted; according to Stenhouse, issues falling in this category, especially those connected with 'the arts' have, as their chief characteristic, that they '... do not arouse (sic) the citizenry' (ibid., p.114). The controversy over intention appears to belong to the last named category: but not only has it failed to arouse the citizenry, it has also made little impact on professional fields pertaining to the arts, notably art education theory.

This distinction is central to the present enquiry as a whole, not only in view of this researcher's stated aim that it '... will adopt a subject-centred approach to curriculum development' (Research Proposal, 1984, p.2), but, more especially, because it raises salient questions concerning the epistemological foundations of the curriculum in general. The subject matter of community-based controversy appears to be readily assimilated into the knowledge bases of disciplines or branches of disciplines as diverse as sociology, medical ethics, peace studies, politics, anthropology, etc., which, in particular, renders the demarcation of 'subjects' problematic. On the other hand, if the

distinction between 'subject-based' and 'broader community-based' controversy has validity, does this imply a corresponding distinction in pedagogical approaches or can strategies for teaching the one kind of controversy be equally applied to the other? Such considerations are important because writers in this area, including those cited above, typically make the distinction between 'subject-based' and 'broader community-based' controversy in order to focus more clearly on the latter.

The *prima facie* assumption that the controversy over intention is 'subject-based' (i.e., primarily an academic dispute) is open to challenge. First, this assumption can be identified with the 'empiricist tradition of aesthetics' which Margolis (1980b, p.4) systematically sought to repudiate in Art and Philosophy. It may prove helpful to recall that Margolis's main aim in that work, of which his analysis of artistic intention formed a central part, was to develop '... a genuinely comprehensive theory about the conceptual relationships holding between physical nature, organismic life, and cultural development' (ibid., p.3). Over against empiricism and foundationalism in aesthetics (and in general philosophy) Margolis insisted that artworks are 'culturally emergent entities' which '... possess attributes essential to ontic analysis and aesthetic appreciation that are themselves not perceptually accessible' (ibid., p.4). Accordingly, if Margolis's thesis concerning the ontological status of artworks is accepted, it becomes necessary to re-define the epistemological status of aesthetics; for if determining the boundaries of artworks is to be viewed as problematic, then marking off the 'subject' art (criticism) from its broader cultural context

must be viewed as equally problematic. Hence, from an art education standpoint, it is inappropriate to accept too readily an attenuated conception of aesthetics which the term 'subject-based' might seem to imply.

Second, as an elaboration of the above point, the assumption that the controversy over intention is 'subject-based' contains the latent misconception that aesthetic theory, as it relates to art criticism, is a distinct discourse removed from moral, social, or political values. The issue is not whether such values are contained in the subject matter of art - in the case of many artworks they indubitably are - rather, it has to do with whether or not aesthetic theory is conducive to the development of a metacritical attitude toward the legitimating structures, intellectual and institutional, of art and criticism. (It is axiomatic that metacriticism involves exploration of the links between the moral, social, or political values of art and those of the wider community.) The distinction between 'subject-based' and 'community-based' controversy cannot, therefore, be drawn too firmly without, at the same time, making concessions to the insularity and subject-centredness of a particular conception of the (art) curriculum which is dominant on both sides of the Atlantic, namely, technocratic rationality' (cf., for example, Giroux, 1981, pp.9-11; Wellington, 1986; Beyer & Zeichner, 1987, p.314f.; Hamblen, 1987, pp.68-69).<sup>1</sup>

In brief, the dividing line between 'subject-based' and 'community-based' controversy is not easy to define with any certainty; indeed, the distinction itself, valid and useful though it might be up to a



point, is not a fixed entity but partly reflects the current state of pedagogical knowledge which is neither static nor continuous in all aspects of content and procedure with the grounding disciplines themselves. The nature of 'subjects' in the curricula of schools and other educational establishments owes as much to the history of their development as to their supposedly inherent formal structure. As Popkewitz (1987) observed:

What is taught as science, social studies, art or literature in schooling has a greater relation to the particular history and culture of schooling than to the practices of the disciplines from which the subject matter is drawn. (p.344).

This observation underlines the importance for the present enquiry of questioning the subject-/community-based distinction. Given the interpenetration of scholarship, pedagogy and culture, it is essential that the analysis of particular controversies, whatever their provenance, should take place in recognition of the fact that academic knowledge in general is susceptible of controversy.

### 7.3 The 'Subject' and 'Pedagogical' Perspectives of Teachers

A detailed exposition of aesthetic controversy, such as that concerning the issue of intention, cannot of itself determine what should take place in the classroom. Implications for practice do not automatically follow from merely describing (clarifying) either an empirical situation or an area of theoretical concern. The values of the researcher and consumers of research (usually teachers) must coincide if the transfer of theoretical materials from the realm of aesthetics to that of education is to take place. Talk of implications is pointless unless the researcher's values are made

explicit and, especially in a piece of theoretical research, vigorously defended.

On the other hand, there is a sense in which the structure of knowledge content can be said to determinatively shape or influence the way it is taught. According to Schwab (1964, pp.24-30), the organization of knowledge into school subjects may easily mask or 'play down' the conflicts, past and present, of the parent disciplines. A 'tidied-up' version of an area of knowledge makes for easier school consumption; alternatively, in Schwab's view, a curriculum which presents the '... revisionary character of knowledge' to learners through examining its 'inconsistencies and disparities,' may prove less easy to teach, but will be a truer reflection of the '... substantive structures of the disciplines.' Analysis of the determinative function of knowledge content raises an issue central to the sociology of knowledge within the sociology of education, namely, that of gauging the extent to which knowledge in the curriculum is a means of political control that 'reproduces' social reality and perpetuates the supposed inequalities of capitalism. This 'functionalist' (Marxist) view of knowledge has been widely challenged (Whitty, 1985, pp.14-15) on grounds similar to those outlined above in respect of extreme epistemological relativism (see Chap. 4.4.2). For present purposes, it is important to consider carefully what is implied by the claim that knowledge has a determinative function, because, although this researcher rejects the crude social determinism of some elements of Marxist theory, a case has already been made in the context of art history (see Chap. 3.2) for regarding certain aspects of knowledge to be imbued with the values of dominant interest

groups. Hence it is important to recognize, as Whitty (ibid.) does, that there are grounds for viewing the relativization of knowledge as a '... procedural device for subverting our taken-for-granted assumptions about the seemingly absolute status' of school knowledge, without at the same time committing oneself to extreme relativism as an epistemological position. With this caution in mind, some texts belonging to the more radical wing of the sociology of knowledge will be referred to in this section alongside other sources.

In seeking to take account of the values that shape the development of curriculum knowledge, it is necessary to distinguish between values inherent in the institutional structures of the parent discipline and those of individual teachers, albeit formed as a result of discipline-based background and training. The values of teachers are held in respect of some 'thing' that is deemed by them to be worth the attention of learners. The content of a subject is not inert and value-free, but, in the process of negotiation or mediation by the teacher, is imbued with his/her values and interests (although teachers' views on subject content are but one element of curriculum change). In this sense, content may be legitimately classed as a determinative function of classroom procedures. However, this determinative function is partial because classroom knowledge invariably reflects the teacher's perspectives on subject content and pedagogy. According to the radical sociologist Esland:<sup>2</sup>

The knowledge components which form pedagogy have a different intellectual heritage from the epistemologies which form and sustain 'subjects' and their realization has taken place within different social milieux. (1971, p.84)

One of the great difficulties which is likely to arise in any research into pedagogical and subject perspectives is to phenomenologically reduce to separate analytical categories what

is, for teachers, a total, taken for granted classroom praxis ... If pedagogical assumptions control the intentionality about how particular knowledge should be arranged, the subject perspective will contain the rationales for why certain knowledge should be taught. (ibid., p.98, emphases in orig.)

The importance of differentiating these two perspectives applies not only to the researcher who investigates classroom settings or the social organization of school communities; it should also underscore the efforts of those who engage in curriculum innovation and implementation, whether as teacher or teacher-researcher. As Skilbeck and Harris (1976) pointed out:

When analysing - and constructing - curricula it is as important to understand how the totality of school experience contributes to the curriculum as to grasp the significance of particular items and sequences of content. (p.42)

Hence, in a piece of theoretical research such as the present one, it is vital to recognize that outcomes, however clearly stated from the subject perspective, will inevitably undergo a process of 'transaction', 'negotiation', even 'reconstitution' (Esland, op. cit.) in the classroom and wider cultural context of the school or college. Nevertheless, a question remains as to the extent to which content clarified from the 'subject' perspective determines pedagogical method irrespective of extraneous influences (accepting the above qualified sense of 'determine'). In this researcher's opinion, Esland makes too sharp a distinction between the 'how' of the pedagogical perspective and the 'why' of the subject perspective. If Bruner's view that subjects represent 'structures of knowledge and inquiry' is accepted (Skilbeck and Harris, op. cit., p.73, emphasis added), then the curriculum researcher's understanding of 'how particular knowledge should be arranged' (Esland, op. cit.) will be drawn as much from the

subject as the pedagogical perspective. Indeed, in the case of content as potentially demanding as, for example, the controversy over intention, the 'subject' (aesthetics) is undoubtedly the major perspective on the structure and sequencing of curriculum materials (Smith & Smith, 1981). Clear statements on 'method' are dependent, however, on the level of specificity attached to it; that is, on whether methods are framed at the level of 'principles' for guiding teachers in their thinking about critical exploration in the classroom or whether such principles are translated into 'procedures' or even prescriptions for teaching/learning, in which case the polymorphous character of classroom interaction would render the consideration of factors such as social background, interests and readiness of learners, more pressing (cf. Chap. 6.2).

Skilbeck and Harris (op. cit., p.57) have suggested that, in teaching advanced students, the subject perspective far outweighs the pedagogical perspective, whereas for beginning and intermediate levels of schooling, pedagogical considerations are of greater relevance. The implication is that as a school subject becomes more specialized, learning methods show progressively more resemblance to the enquiry methods of the parent discipline. The research student in, for example, the history of art will have internalized the commitments and thinking capacities of the professional art historian. In a very real sense he or she is a fully institutionalized, if not yet fully professionalized, art historian.

If, though, controversy in aesthetics is an advanced area of content (indeed, this claim has been made in the present enquiry with respect

to discipline-based controversy as such), and if advanced learners are on a par, academically, with professional scholars, then why bother with pedagogical considerations? Are there not grounds here for accepting Beardsley's view that it is necessary only to clarify subject material in order for it to be directly transferable to instruction (see Chap. 6.2)? However, to maintain that advanced knowledge is the sole preserve of the advanced learner is to obscure the fact that a mature student's abilities are the culmination of many years of schooling, during which the structures of advanced knowledge and related modes of enquiry are progressively anticipated. As Passmore (1967, esp. p.429) insisted, skills of critical thinking focused on controversial material should be taught early in the school careers of all children and not be restricted to courses in higher education. Ecker (1973), too, has demonstrated that artistically unsophisticated children are capable of incipient metacritical reasoning.

It is likely that the teacher's pedagogical perspective exerts less influence on his or her decisions about the '... scope, balance, sequence and interrelatedness of subject matter' (Skilbeck & Harris, op. cit., p.57) for advanced learners, because problems linked to factors like the motivation and intellectual development of pupils tend to recede as specialization increases. Nevertheless, research into the curricular implications of advanced material cannot ignore the pedagogical significance of the stages that lead to it. Moreover, the teacher's pedagogical perspective does not cease to be relevant because he or she is teaching advanced learners.

A consideration of the interconnectedness of the subject and pedagogical perspectives of all teachers will serve to introduce an important area of discussion, which is that a shift in teachers' views about the theoretical basis of their subject can be an important first step towards a revision of their pedagogical perspective. It is implied by the present enquiry's emphasis on discipline-based, controversial material that this is a one-way process in which the impetus for change comes from the teacher's developing appreciation of the nature of subject content. On the contrary, an individual may, through working as a teacher, experience changes in epistemological viewpoint that have repercussions for his or her subject perspective. Hence, the idea of a one-way process from subject to pedagogy is misleading.

The role of the teacher in either perpetuating or challenging existing structures of knowledge in relation to society is the central theme of recent studies on the application of critical theory to education (Schon, 1982; Giroux, *op. cit.*; Adler & Goodman, 1986; Beyer, 1986; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Gibson, 1986; Beyer & Zeichner, *op. cit.*; Popkewitz, *op. cit.*). It is a matter of conjecture why these studies concentrate on the teacher and pay relatively little attention to the learner. Probably this is due to the radical political ambience of critical theory which encourages the view that attitudinal change in teachers is a necessary condition of developing an intellectual climate conducive to socio-political change. Moreover, it is self-evident that the 'top-down' assumptions of discipline-based curriculum construction will ensure that more emphasis is placed on instructional than learning theory. This claim is relevant to the present research.

Given its central preoccupation with discipline-based content and its emphasis on developing principles rather than procedures of metacriticism (see Chap. 6.2), learning theory is not directly examined. Nevertheless, beyond the scope of this enquiry, which aims to align aesthetic and instructional theory, there is a need to define 'instruction' in terms of the tasks which both teacher and learners are expected to perform in respect of the same pedagogical content.

In the light of comments on the relationship between teachers' subject and pedagogical perspectives three positions can be identified. First, there are teachers whose views of subject and pedagogy are consistent with the 'psychometric model' and its empiricist preconceptions (Esland, op. cit.). Examples in the arts would be teachers of literature operating within a Leavisite 'moral/humanistic' view of English studies (Weldhen, 1986; Eaton, 1984), and teachers of the history of art who '... accept the traditional definitions of the discipline', including notions of the artist as 'individual genius' and '... art as an autonomous self-propelling force isolated from the cultural context' (Garb, 1984). Second, there are teachers whose views on subject and pedagogy are, temporarily at least, in a state of unresolved tension because changes in the definition of their subject outside the realm of education have led them to question the adequacy and appropriateness of their teaching. Note, for example, the complaints of some English literature and history of art educators that 'A' Level examination syllabuses for their respective subjects have not kept pace with the important theoretical developments of recent professional scholarship (ibid.; Weldhen, op. cit.; Eaton, op. cit.; Wilce, 1984; Gormally & Nunn, 1986). Third, there are those



teachers who have progressed beyond the irresolution and inconsistency (of practice, at least) of the preceding category. For such, teaching methods and choice of subject material are grounded in the presuppositions of the 'epistemological model' (Esland, op. cit.), which, in the case of literature and history of art educators, would imply a constant readiness to adapt their pedagogical strategies to take account of changes occurring in the definitions of their respective disciplines (e.g., Eaton, op. cit.; Dyson, 1989).

#### 7.4 Teaching About Fundamental Controversies

It is posited that the achievement of a consistent pedagogy of metacriticism depends on the alignment of (some form of) critical pluralism with a compatible theory of instruction. It remains to seek an alignment of theoretical positions, but in a manner which incorporates the insights that have arisen thus far in respect of general education theory. First, it will be helpful to review and reflect on key points that have emerged during the enquiry as a whole.

At the start of the research it was assumed that metacriticism might be taught in two ways: either to influence learners ultimately to favour one position on a controversial issue or to encourage impartiality and tolerance of different positions. It was anticipated that these two 'commonsense' alternatives would be extended through analyzing the controversy over intention in relation to controversy in aesthetics and by consulting art and literature education texts on teaching controversial issues (including intention). An analysis of Margolis' Art and Philosophy in Chapter 5 revealed that controversy in aesthetics involves complex epistemological and ontological disputes

concerning the relationship of art and criticism. The controversy over intention was found to be representative of the contestability of criticism and was deemed, therefore, to be an apt focus for developing a more sophisticated pedagogy of metacriticism than the 'commonsense' alternatives outlined above.

Nevertheless, consulting educational texts on teaching about the concept of intention in art and literature provided scant theoretical assistance with which to achieve a pedagogy of metacriticism. Art and English education theorists appeared to have made little attempt to combine their understanding of intention with a compatible theory of instruction. Nor had any attempted to discuss the pedagogical implications of the controversy over intention, as opposed to different stances on intentionalist criticism. This constituted a problem. On the one hand, the investigation of literature education sources demonstrated an inseparable link between ontology and critical method, the 'what' and 'how' of criticism in the classroom (Chap. 6.3.2). On the other hand, establishing a link between the 'what' of critical pluralism and the 'how' of approaches to teaching it did not appear so amenable to demonstration.

It is proposed that teaching about fundamental controversies, such as the contested concept of intention, is bound to raise 'why' issues in relation to the 'what' (content) and 'how' (methods) of instruction. Such controversies, if seriously presented as curriculum foci, would problematize taken-for-granted knowledge and thereby expose learners to the experience of intellectual uncertainties. Moreover, the 'structure' of fundamental controversies 'determines' not only that

curriculum content be made representatively problematic, but also that such controversies should be taught at appropriate levels of instruction.

The association of 'fundamental controversy' and 'structure' appears paradoxical: the former conveys the sense of unresolvable tension, whereas the latter usually denotes order and durability, even permanence. It is claimed elsewhere, however, that the discipline of aesthetics is a dynamic structure which is typically revealed by its controversial aspects (Chap. 5). The validity of that claim is lent support by Eisner's (1989) discussion of the rationale for Discipline-based Art Education (DBAE) in the U.S.A., in which he stated that 'structure' does not necessarily imply an acceptance of 'rationalistic' or 'elitist' assumptions about the subject 'art'; instead, it might, with more justification, be thought of as a dynamic concept which reflected the pluralistic and revisionary character of such knowledge. This idea of knowledge as a dynamic structure dispels the sense of paradox: dynamism is neither a state of inertia nor a state of flux. For, on the one hand, critical practice exhibits a large degree of continuity, which accounts for the considerable agreement among critical judgements; but, on the other, the intractability of controversies in the field of criticism sets limits to our expectations about critical objectivity.

The dynamism inherent in the structure of a discipline will be brought most fully to light through teaching the controversial aspects of that discipline; however, this raises the question of deciding on a strategy that will best represent the interplay of objectivity and

relativism which the concept of 'structure' has been said to imply? This question encapsulates the problem of aligning aesthetic theory and instructional theory, which, when it was first raised (Chap. 6.2), was considered a problem of synthesizing aesthetic concepts and instructional methods through consulting the writings of educational theorists. It was seen to be theory-oriented. As the enquiry progressed, however, it became clear that a shift of emphasis was needed to take account of the role of the teacher as mediator of knowledge. Recognition of the importance of this role ruled out the notion that metacritical strategies can be formulated at a level of abstraction removed from considerations of teacher commitment. In brief, it is necessary to describe the pedagogical implications of aesthetic controversy in terms not merely of theoretical principles to be applied to the realm of teaching, but of the kind of individual teacher who would embody these principles. This represents a shift from an exclusive concern with pedagogy to a growing awareness of the character and role of the pedagogue.

The conclusion is reached that the structure of fundamental controversy, such as that prompted by intention, does not merely raise implications for the sequence and organization of curriculum materials, but also implies a teaching stance which has moral, social and political consequences. Though this conclusion may seem overstated when one considers the arcane realms of aesthetic controversy, it is sustainable by analogy with the teaching of 'community-based' controversy. The analogy depends on the validity of arguments already put forward by this researcher to propose (i) that so-called 'community-based' and 'discipline-based' controversy are no

different in principle, and (ii) that teachers of fundamental controversy, of whatever provenance, must try to make sense, through their teaching, of the plurality of views regarding the nature of reality that exist both within and across the 'disciplines'.

### 7.5 Pedagogical Role Models

The particular role and character of the teacher implied by the teaching of controversy has been designated most often in educational writings by the term 'neutrality' (Stenhouse, 1970; Elliott, 1974; Hulmes, 1979; Dearden, 1981; Stradling, 1984a, 1984b; Kelly, 1986; Bridges, 1986; Rudduck, 1986). 'Neutrality' appears, though, an inadequate term with which to characterize an individual who is committed to probing and questioning the epistemological foundations of his or her own 'subject'. However, a number of these writers have made the point that being committed to non-commitment, i.e., neutrality, is not contradictory: for example, Hulmes (op. cit., pp.9,21), has written of the teacher 'committed ... to neutrality', who seeks to '... proselytize on behalf of his own scepticism'. This kind of neutrality is often associated with a relativistic acceptance of conflicting positions on the view that objectivity is largely unattainable, for example in the case of extreme anti-intentionalism (Chap. 6.4.2).

A more typical usage of 'neutrality' in relation to teaching controversy is to denote strategies in which the teacher introduces controversial topics to learners whilst assuming an attitude of detachment: an approach referred to in educational writings by the key term 'procedural neutrality' (e.g., Stenhouse, op. cit.; Stradling,

op. cit.; Rudduck, op. cit.). An important characteristic of the approach is that it is agreed upon beforehand by both teacher and learners in the hope that it will enable the latter to express their views on a topic unhindered by the aura of authority normally associated with the teacher's role. Its chief advantage is said to be that it '... forces students to rely more on their own critical intelligence' (Kelly, op. cit., p.126), although doubts have been voiced about its overall effectiveness on the grounds that the self-imposed 'silence' of teachers who follow this approach is impossible to sustain in situations where classroom debate becomes vociferous, unbalanced, or tangential (Dearden, op. cit., p.42). In situations such as these, the role of neutralist is rendered unworkable and teachers are placed in the awkward and ambivalent position of having to switch roles in mid-stream in order to maintain their credibility. Alternatively, 'procedural neutrality' may become unworkable in situations where learners are unable to overcome their view of individual teachers as authority figures, despite the best efforts of the latter to relinquish this role (ibid.). The ambivalence of the teacher's position is also made apparent by having both to 'feed' learners with factual information, whilst at the same time chairing the ensuing debate.

'Procedural neutrality' is, therefore, provisional and limited in its application. The claim that it can help to wean learners from their institutionalized dependence on teachers' opinions (Bridges, op. cit., p.31f.) also implies that its effectiveness will diminish in inverse proportion to the development of the '... autonomous critical intelligence of learners' (Kelly, op. cit., p.129). In recognition of

the provisional character of 'procedural neutrality' Dearden (op. cit., p.42) insisted that it was '... a technique, not a principle', by which he meant that, whilst it could be usefully adopted as a teaching style, it could just as readily be set aside if a situation demanded it. By contrast, the teaching of fundamental controversies requires a more adequate basis of role-modelling than that of 'mere' technique. It implies an individual teacher who, acting as a model for learners to emulate, shows a critical awareness of the theoretical positions underlying disputes in his or her discipline and an alertness to the parallels between these and related disputes in other fields of knowledge.

The notion of 'neutrality' is undoubtedly linked to the teaching of controversy. The key question, as far as this enquiry is concerned, is what kind of neutrality will bear the full weight of implications arising from the foregoing analysis of controversy in aesthetics? Bridges (op. cit., p.31) has argued that beyond 'procedural neutrality', in which the teacher of controversy '... withholds support from any point of view', is an approach, namely, 'affirmative neutrality', which '... supports alternative points of view equally', but in a manner which, whilst avoiding the feigned detachment typical of 'procedural neutrality' (considering it inappropriate to the material under discussion), nevertheless stops short of the urgency and inventive partisanship of the teacher who favours a single position. The individual who adopts a stance of 'affirmative neutrality' is truly 'double minded' in the sense described by Elliott (1974), that is, a 'lover of truth' who seeks

... to identify now with one of the contesting points of view, now with the other, resolving that neither (sic) shall be sold short on any matter. (p.147).

This kind of teacher manifests commitment, but it is directed to the merits of alternative positions in a way which preserves their unique contributions and strenuously resists, by means of argument and counter-argument, the adversative tendency which each position reveals towards its rivals. The teacher who is thus 'involved on both sides' of a dispute acts on the belief that, because fundamental controversies contain 'insoluble problems', the triumph of one position over another would be a too easy victory and hence a denial of truth (ibid.). Elliott's discussion suggests that pedagogical practice should not be concerned merely with 'enquiry', that is, the pursuit of objective knowledge, but it should also concern itself with fostering a 'contemplative attitude', in which learners might come to 'realize' something of the import and mystery of the world through a personal encounter with the objects of study.

Kelly (op. cit., p.130f.) put forward a similar idea to that of Bridges and Elliott with his term 'committed impartiality', which he described as combining teacher disclosure on a point of controversy with an active presentation of all available viewpoints. He categorically denied that teacher disclosure is inimical to an impartial search for truth on the grounds that personally stated convictions do not of necessity 'preclude rational analysis' (emotion and reason should not be viewed as a simple dualism) and that teachers have at their disposal a number of 'corrective strategies' to counteract any manipulative effects which the statement of their convictions might cause. He also maintained that the disclosure of



the teacher's viewpoint early on in a classroom discussion would enable learners to detect and thus make allowance for unintentional bias in the teacher's presentation.

The teacher of controversy described by the above writers would attempt to create a climate of discussion in the classroom to enable issues to be tackled realistically, although he or she would also be aware that the paths of enquiry are well trodden and that the possibility of pushing back the frontiers of knowledge, much less achieving significant steps toward a resolution of the controversy, is exceedingly remote. The pursuit of truth in the context of classroom knowledge means no more (or less) than comparing and contrasting the respective merits of alternative positions on a specific issue through examining arguments advanced by their proponents. In so doing, teacher and learners would position themselves at the frontier of knowledge and at least contemplate, if they do not penetrate, the territory beyond.

The combination of 'commitment' and 'impartiality' advocated by the above writers is paradoxical, but not necessarily contradictory (Kelly, op. cit., p.130). It only becomes so when '... to support alternative views equally' (Bridges, op. cit., emphasis added) implies an indiscriminate toleration of opposing positions, irrespective of merit, and an avoidance of value judgements. In their separate ways, Bridges, Elliott, and Kelly expressed their dissatisfaction with the term 'neutrality' on the grounds that the attitude of non-involvement which it conveys is inappropriate as a model for teaching material that has been forged in an atmosphere of commitment. Bridges, in

particular, distinguished between neutrality, which he said implied indiscriminateness, and impartiality, which he defined in terms of a rationality and critical objectivity that grants 'differential support' to the range of available opinions (op. cit., p.31). Hence, to grant equal support to alternative views in one's teaching in the qualified sense allowed by Bridges need not necessarily entail an acceptance of all views as equally valid. The structure of fundamental controversy implies a genuine contest between well-matched protagonists, which suggests that all views should be treated as serious contenders in the pursuit of truth, whilst leaving open the question as to whether one view might not, in some aspects at least, afford greater explanatory power than its rivals.

There is, however, a problem inherent in this claim, which is highlighted by Stradling's (1984a, p.2) assertion that controversies arise when 'significant groups ... advocate conflicting explanations or solutions based on alternative values', and by Dearden's (op. cit., p.38) 'epistemic criterion of the controversial': namely, that '... a matter is controversial if contrary views can be held on it without those views being contrary to reason'. If the teacher of controversial material is to apply 'differential' support (that is, judge between alternative views) then it needs to be clarified precisely what criteria of evaluation are generally applicable. The implication of Stradling's and Dearden's comments is that these can be formulated only up to a point (examples of such criteria in action might be the assessment of the internal consistency of arguments and the testing of empirical claims in the light of observation); beyond this, 'controversiality' is at its most intractable and represents the

point of conflict between 'whole frameworks of understanding' (Dearden, op. cit.) each with its own value system.

The notion of 'differential support' suggests that the teaching of controversy ought to be evaluative as well as descriptive. Learners should not merely be allowed to sit on the sidelines and observe, but encouraged to engage in the pursuit of truth which lies at the heart of the controversy under discussion. The issue of whether to support equally all sides of a controversy in one's teaching, or to grant 'differential support', seems to imply a difference of emphasis between a neutrally descriptive approach and one that combines description with evaluation. The pedagogical implications are brought out most fully in educational writings on the teaching of comparative religion. Hulmes (op. cit.), for example, has written of the dilemma faced by religious education specialists who, when attempting to 'teach about' world religions (that is, in a neutrally descriptive manner), find themselves failing to do justice in each case to a viewpoint which

... lays claim to the whole person and at the same time refuses to be classified as just one of many possible ways of apprehending reality. (p.17).

The essence of a descriptive approach, according to Cox (1983), is

... that you (sic) look at religions as an external observer, try to understand what they mean to the believer, but do not raise the question of whether he is wise to believe, or whether his belief corresponds to truth. (p.26)

These comments suggest that teaching comparative religion poses similar pedagogical problems to those encountered in teaching

controversial issues elsewhere in the curriculum. They indicate that the nature of religious belief demands commitment on the part of adherents and, therefore, requires a corresponding atmosphere of commitment in the classroom to do it justice. Such teaching should also reflect religious divergence, but not at the expense of religion's central characteristic, the pursuit or promulgation of ultimate truth. The comments further confirm Bridges's insistence that the nature of fundamental controversy, whether in religion, aesthetics, science, or elsewhere in the curriculum, 'requires differential support' (op. cit., emphasis added), or support that is relative (viewpoint by viewpoint) according to specified criteria. The teacher of controversial material ought, therefore, to be committed to something more than a laudable desire to ensure that different viewpoints are give a fair hearing. He or she must also be prepared, at least in principle, to test the validity and theoretical cogency of those viewpoints, even at the risk of causing offence to some learners. It is not hard, though, to appreciate why 'grasping the nettle' of evaluation has been largely avoided by teachers working in the specially sensitive area of religious education.

An evaluative approach to teaching controversial issues implies that the teacher should assist learners in identifying criteria by which the different viewpoints can be assessed; however, the intractability of fundamental controversy also implies that no single 'monistic' position, or theoretical 'higher ground', exists with which to encompass those differences. Hence, there are limits to an evaluative approach which need to be clearly taken into account, as, for example, those contained in the American philosopher Pepper's (1946, 1970)

discussion of eclecticism, in which he identified four alternative, mutually incompatible 'world hypotheses' which function as 'positive standards of cognition' (1970, p.328), Mechanism, Contextualism, Organicism, and Formism. He claimed that forming judgements about artworks in the light of each of the world hypotheses 'in turn' will give the best chance of achieving the 'fullest wisdom' (1946, Chap.6 emphasis added). Pepper described this 'method' of criticism (and, by implication, metacriticism) as 'post-rational eclecticism': first, because it preserves intact the force and integrity of each set of categories whilst avoiding syncretism (cf. King & Brownell, 1966, pp.61-62); and second, because it ensures a 'balance of theories' (Pepper, 1970, p.334). According to Pepper:

We need all world hypotheses, so far as they are adequate, for mutual comparison and correction of interpretative bias.  
(ibid., p.10, emphases added).

Each 'hypothesis' makes a valuable contribution towards overall understanding, but none alone can be expected to resolve all difficulties of interpretation. A 'method' such as 'postrational eclecticism', or 'alternativity' (de Beaugrande, 1984) is needed in order to realize the fullest interpretive potential of specific artworks.

Pepper affirmed that each of the world hypotheses is valid according to the criterion of 'structural corroboration', which means that the investigation of phenomena within each 'hypothesis' is a self-certifying process that constitutes or lends shape to reality in so far as it generates evidence which confirms the cognitive structure underlying the investigation itself. Observations made in this way

are referred to by Pepper as 'danda', that is, aspects of perceived reality that have meaning only within the theoretical matrix of a particular view of the world. He also affirmed that each of the world hypotheses is valid according to the more general criterion of 'referential adequacy': this impinges on interpretive activity within the different 'hypotheses' by requiring that observations accord with the structure of phenomena existing independently from the determinative influence of each viewpoint. Observations made in this way are referred to by Pepper as 'data'. In brief, danda are characteristic of particular world hypotheses, data are common currency.

Pepper's distinction between danda and data implies that the validity of evidence in the former category is wedded ('hypothesis' by 'hypothesis') to a particular view of the world: hence, because it does not carry the same weight for adherents of alternative viewpoints, it is unlikely to provide a basis for settling disputes. Defining the boundaries between these different types of evidence would thus be a means of enabling the teacher of controversy to control classroom investigations effectively by making clear to learners where the field of dispute is open to genuine advancement and where it is likely to remain forever problematic. By subjecting his or her own position to prior scrutiny, the teacher is revealed as one who is not afraid to test the validity of that position against the learners' attempts at critical judgement. The role and character of the pedagogue thus revealed is not that of 'the one who knows', that is, a truth-dispenser, but an individual who, by adopting an informed

but open stance to the problems posed by controversial issues, is a 'truth for students' (Bilkin quoted by Kelly, op. cit., p.132).

This distinction in Pepper's writings coincides, in this researcher's opinion, with that referred to earlier in respect of perceptual theory (Chap. 6.3.3). In that case, the distinction was between theorists who emphasize the conventional 'language' of perception gained through enculturation, and others who emphasize instead the impact of ecological factors on perceptual processing across cultures. A similar distinction was also discussed in Chapter 6 with respect to the perception of artworks. It was shown that the teacher of controversy in aesthetics needs to be aware of two possible ways of characterizing artworks: whether to approach them as entities requiring interpretation in their own terms, that is, as self-subsistent objects of critical attention, or by reference to broader standards of cognition in which moral, social, and political factors are considered. The second of these two approaches would lead to an evaluation of artworks which neither venerated the supposed intentions of the artist, nor held back from criticism of the social milieu to which the artist belonged.

More especially, comparing these conclusions about teaching controversy in aesthetics with the outcomes of the enquiry in this chapter strongly suggests that it is the responsibility of art educators to ensure that questioning 'taken for granted' knowledge is made a central focus of their teaching and thus of the learning experiences they offer to young people. The consideration of theory emanating from the critical theorists examined in this chapter also

indicates that teaching about 'subject-based' controversy, such as that prompted by intention, would help to dispel the parochialism and peripheral status which, with some justification, has long characterized the place of art in the curriculum (Eisner, 1987, p.11).

## 7.6 Summary

In this chapter, the focus of the research enquiry has shifted from considering the controversy over intention as representative of the contestability of aesthetics, to considering the teaching of controversy across the curriculum. This has been conducted in respect of separate strands of educational theory. First, it was queried whether the distinction between 'subject-based' and 'community-based' controversy is as clear-cut as some writers have indicated. This questioning was thought necessary because such writers typically explore the pedagogical implications of 'community-based' controversy and avoid discussion of the teaching of 'academic' disputes (e.g., intention). Hence, a case was made for the relevance of these writers' proposals to the teaching of controversy as a whole.

Furthermore, the idea that pedagogical content represents a coalescence of teachers' perspectives on (i) their own specialisms, and (ii) the purposes and processes of education as a whole was explored. This enquiry has led to the conclusion that a pedagogy of metacriticism, that is, teaching controversy as a specific focus, cannot simply be defined as an alignment of discipline-based content with instructional methods, but must also take into account the kind of individual teacher and learner implied by that content. In brief, the teaching of fundamental controversy requires more than proficiency



in the pedagogue; it also requires a value commitment. Three models for the teaching of fundamental controversy have been identified in educational literature: procedural neutrality; affirmative neutrality, which grants equal support to the different sides of a controversy; and an evaluative extension of affirmative neutrality, which grants differential support to the different sides of a controversy and involves the paradoxical, but non-contradictory, combination of the notions 'commitment' and 'impartiality'. Procedural neutrality was shown to involve the teacher in a deliberate concealment of the teacher's position and to result, therefore, in an ambivalence between individual values and teaching style. Affirmative neutrality was shown to represent a more consistent model for the teaching of controversy; nevertheless, it fell short of applying evaluative criteria to the competing positions, at least in those aspects in which it was not possible to do so, and thus failed to represent fully the nature of fundamental controversy as the pursuit of truth according to some set of values. The most consistent model was judged to be that described variously by educational theorists in terms of commitment and impartiality. This model, which involves the teacher and learners in some degree of evaluation of competing positions, projects a state of pedagogical equilibrium which mirrors the dynamic interplay of oppositional forces characteristic of the controversial aspects of knowledge. The teacher who is thus represented is revealed to learners as a truth seeker in a realm which resists all attempts at ultimate resolution (part of the teacher's task being to distinguish between insoluble problems and those which are amenable to investigation). The approach advocated by these writers achieves a harmony of individual values and teaching style.

The writing of this chapter has combined analysis with a synthesis of insights that have emerged gradually during the course of the research. A process of dialectical reasoning, as exemplified by Margolis's method of analysis, has been followed (see above, Chap. 2.8) and this has led to an identification of issues underlying the relation of content and methods of criticism. Moreover, it has enabled the problem of aligning aesthetic and instructional theory to be addressed more fully, though without the detail needed for the development of curricular proposals, much less a programme of study. The practical eclecticism thought to be implied by the teaching of metacriticism has been linked to a theoretical eclecticism in which subject content, teaching stance and, particularly in the early stages of schooling, learning development, would be brought into close harmony. Thus it has been assumed that practical effectiveness in the teaching of metacriticism must be grounded in theoretical consistency touching all aspects of pedagogy.

## CHAPTER 8

### PRINCIPLES OF METACRITICISM IN ART EDUCATION

#### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter constitutes an attempt to synthesize arguments that have arisen during the earlier analyses of separate fields of theory with regard to teaching controversy in aesthetics. References to authoritative texts will be kept to a minimum, because in this phase of the research it is considered necessary that the investigation of theoretical 'data' in previous chapters should be superseded by an emphasis on distilled content. This bringing together of different contextual strands represents a new direction in the writing. Key issues or 'findings' of the research will be reviewed, not in a linear, cumulative manner, but by drawing connections between the various levels of theory and reflecting on their significance for practice. The aim is to translate findings into principles and procedures for a pedagogy of metacriticism. In this connection, specific classes of artworks will be discussed with a view to demonstrating ways in which metacritical principles could be applied. The creation of new perspectives on the content and methods of art teaching must relate to the original research problem which was stated in Chapter 1.1 and revised, or rather refined, during the course of subsequent analysis. In particular, it is essential to show how the research findings can be 'used' to 'fill the gap' in art education theory and practice identified in the analytical review reported in Chapter 3 (see esp. Chap. 3.6).

This final chapter has two main emphases. First, a reflection on the experience of implementing a methodological and dialogical research strategy with reference to the problem of 'communication,' to be followed by a review of various strands of enquiry leading, progressively, to a synthesis of findings. Second, an extended statement on the relevance of the research for art education incorporating curricular proposals and recommendations for practice.

## 8.2 Review of Research Outcomes

In Chapter 1 it was stated that a major aim of the research was to span what appeared to be a 'communication gap' between two professional realms, namely, the philosophy of art and the teaching of art. The subsequent investigation has been that of a teacher-researcher in art education seeking to span a gap in his own understanding of an important aspect of philosophical aesthetics, namely, controversy over the link between art and criticism. The aim has been to communicate research outcomes to other art educators, particularly those who have responsibility for teaching connected with the analytical/critical and historical/cultural domains of art experience (Allison, 1982). This 'communication process' was considered problematic because it involved a distillation of complex conceptual material, which, though aiming to render concepts more accessible to a wider audience, also ran the risk of minimizing their inherent complexities to the point of misrepresentation (Chap.1.2). Given the need for this researcher to develop his personal understanding of theory as a prerequisite for communicating outcomes, a decision was taken early in the study to adopt an emergent research strategy in which arguments arising from an analysis of different

kinds of theory would be synthesized to form an eventual statement of curricular implications.

It is appropriate at this point to recall the kinds of theory analyzed in the preceding chapters:

art education theory relating to the teaching of a range of critical methods, i.e., metacriticism;

philosophical theory bearing on conceptual issues underlying controversy between divergent intellectual traditions;

aesthetic theory bearing on controversy over the link between ontology of art and concomitant methods of criticism;

literature education theory regarding the pedagogical implications of controversy in literary criticism, with particular reference to intention;

general education theory regarding the teaching of controversial issues across the curriculum.

All five 'analyses' involved a combination of private clarification and public communication. In the early chapters clarification was the dominant concern; however, an attempt was also made to 'communicate' through a distillation of concepts: for example, the seven propositions which summarized Chapter 5 (see Appendix III). Hence, it would be misleading to view the 'analyses' as exclusively hermeneutic in content and aims. Nor, for that matter, would it be accurate to view 'synthesis' as exclusively a 'communication' procedure. Analytical and synthetic thinking took place concurrently, especially in Chapter 7 where the emphasis was given to comparing and contrasting different aspects of theory in pursuit of a unified and coherent pedagogy. The distinction between private clarification and public communication is important because, in this final phase of the

enquiry, it is necessary to reflect on the changes in thinking that have taken place over the research period in order to consider what bearing findings at the private level might have on the public realm of art education theorizing.

At the start of the enquiry into art education theory reported in Chapter 3 it seemed impossible to anticipate, except in general terms, the kinds of technical problems likely to arise in connection with translating aspects of different kinds of theory (philosophy of art, literary theory, philosophy of education, etc.) into principles for art teaching. It was necessary to adopt an approach to investigating theory which, whilst providing a conceptual framework, would permit flexibility in regard to the unfolding nature of the research. The provisional character of the study was tested by three public 'communications' (Rawding, 1987, 1988a, 1988b; cf. appendices IV, V, & VI) which, coming at roughly the halfway stage of the research period, represented attempts to discuss outcomes of the largely analytical phases of enquiry with other art educators and also to make tentative speculations about their relevance to art education practice.

This researcher's knowledge of theory at that time regarding the teaching of criticism was largely confined to the writings of 'first generation' American art educators such as Feldman, Smith, Ecker, and Mittler, in which the model for critical practice in the classroom was typically represented as a series of operations based on what were identified as the logical components of criticism: for example, Description, Analysis, Interpretation, and Evaluation or Judgement. Existing models for teaching criticism proved to be inadequate as a

basis for metacritical enquiry because they are unrepresentative of critical diversity as revealed by this researcher's study of irony (Rawding, 1984) and initial reading about controversy in aesthetics with reference to artistic intention.

In the review of art education theory and practice (Chap.3) the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction was found to be a helpful means of classifying divergent approaches in respect of the history and criticism of art. (Intrinsic approaches lay stress on the need to view artworks as autonomous, self-contained entities, whereas extrinsic approaches view artworks as products of external influences, notably the cultural tradition in which the artist stands as enshrined in the conventions, values, interests, and expectations of the artworld and society at large.) Textual evidence confirmed that art educators were taking seriously the need to teach a plurality of concepts and methods of art. What appeared to be missing, though, was a theoretical basis for teaching not just the plurality but the contestability of art and criticism. Although teaching aesthetics in relation to problems in art criticism has been on the agenda of recent North American theorizing, particularly in the wake of Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE), little has been done either to trace connections between a comprehensive range of approaches and larger philosophical disputes, or to link this range of approaches with a compatible theory of (art) instruction. (It was assumed that both are essential 'components' of a pedagogy of metacriticism.)

The intrinsic/extrinsic distinction was found to be linked to the divide between analytical and Continental traditions in aesthetics.

Consequently, the notion of standard oppositions in philosophy and in aesthetics was explored with the aim of clarifying conceptual issues at the heart of disputes over the relationship of art and criticism. The controversial aspects of aesthetics (as with any area of knowledge) were seen to involve questions of ontology - theory concerning the nature or being of entities (including artworks), and epistemology - theory of knowledge.

The analysis of standard oppositions in philosophy (Chap. 4), which was conducted with primary reference to the meta-theorizing of Margolis, Bernstein, and Rorty, was not intended to be strictly theoretical. Rather, it was accompanied by speculation about how theoretical insights arising from the analysis could be applied to teaching a range of critical strategies in art education. First, the idea of a 'divide' between analytical and Continental traditions in philosophy was found to require modification. Whilst Continental theorists are universally anti-foundationalist in regard to knowledge and perception (despite differences in other respects), analytical philosophers are, it seems, also divided between a dominant tradition characterized by a positivist, empiricist view of 'objectivity' and a more radical tendency in the post-Wittgensteinian tradition, in which it is believed that the perceptual/conceptual apparatus of humans is so infused with their values and interests as to make the search for objective truth problematical. A contrast was drawn between the perceptually restricted empiricism of much analytical aesthetics and the non-reductive empiricism of, for example, phenomenology. Taken to extremes, this was identified as a contrast between an objectivist stance which, through empirical enquiry 'discovers' reality and a



relativism which 'makes' or constitutes it. The unwarranted certainty of the one and the profound scepticism of the other were rejected in favour of a middle-ground 'relativism' based on a non-arbitrary, conventional, communal notion of truth arrived at by a continual refinement of conceptual categories in relation to phenomena.

This polar contrast of epistemological extremes was identified as a potential focus for teaching aesthetic criticism because it would assist definition of the theoretical limits underlying a range of critical stances. With this contrast in view, art teachers would be well placed to teach about the strengths and weaknesses of different stances in relation to the ontological and epistemological problems involved. The next step in the research was to draw parallels between the realm of meta-philosophy and the realm of aesthetics with reference to controversy over the link between art and criticism and to speculate in more detail about possibilities for art education.

The standard oppositions of philosophy regarding knowledge and perception were found to be reflected in debates among aestheticians over the nature of art and concomitant methods of criticism (Chap. 5). These were identified, with reference to the work of Margolis, as the extremes of excessive idealism and reductive materialism. A 'middle-ground' position which characterizes artworks as 'culturally emergent entities' was examined in the light of analytical and Continental traditions. The implications of extreme and middle ground positions for the practice of criticism were explored with regard to various issues: for example, the description/interpretation dichotomy and the validity of accepting divergent interpretations of specific works. In

particular, the epistemological problem of how to '... account for knowledge of a world that is essentially conditioned by our understanding' (Bernstein, op. cit., pp.75-76) was brought closer to the realm of practice by considering the problem in criticism of distinguishing what is descriptively 'in' a work from that which is interpretively imputed to it. This was seen to add a significantly new dimension to the characterization of criticism in existing art education models (Chap. 3). The point is that the concept 'artwork' is philosophically problematic as regards identity and individuation; this implies that the object of art criticism is not only the individual work, but also the subtle interaction of artwork, artist, audience, and critic. The next step was to consider ways in which this dynamic view of the artwork as culturally emergent could be applied to the teaching of critical diversity.

With this end in view, a particular issue in aesthetic controversy, namely, that associated with the artist's intention, was examined in the light of education texts on teaching literary criticism in general and intentionalist criticism in particular (Chap. 6). That enquiry explored the idea that intention is representative of the issues examined in the preceding chapter. This was to make a claim that the interrelated issues of aesthetics could be made to appear more relevant to the realm of critical practice by viewing them in the context of intentionalist criticism. The different conceptions of the ontology of art in literature and fine art raised questions about the relation of language and perception. A brief enquiry into perceptual theory confirmed the continuing validity and application of the oppositions noted earlier in regard to epistemology (Chap. 4).

Intrinsic/extrinsic, reductionist/relativist, and materialist/idealist distinctions were further reflected in the ecological/conventionalist distinction of perceptual theory.

Exploring the issue of intention highlighted the problem in criticism of taking into account external influences on, not only artistic production, but also critical reception. This was thought to imply that defining and tracing interconnections between the concepts 'artwork,' 'artist,' and 'critic' is essential for an understanding of intention in given cases. Hence, it was concluded that the issue of artistic intention is more than a dispute between those for and against giving priority to direct biographical evidence; instead it is a special case of a more fundamental epistemological dispute about interpreting the 'intentional', i.e., purposive, characteristics of all forms of human culture. This was described as a difference between the psychological and hermeneutic conceptions of intention. Given the view that interpreting intention is a hermeneutic task, involving exploration of artwork, artist, and critic in relation to reality, it was concluded that this issue is essentially metacritical.

The analysis of literature education theory was an attempt to identify various critical methods associated with teaching intention and to seek evidence of their use as a focus for engaging in metacriticism. It revealed much that was helpful about possible approaches to art criticism, but little guidance on how to align this aspect of aesthetic theory with instructional theory. Briefly, literature education theory proved disappointing as far as the search for a pedagogy of metacriticism in art was concerned. Whereas a consistent

pedagogy of criticism was thought to entail the alignment of (some view of) aesthetic theory with a compatible position on the nature of instruction, a consistent pedagogy of meta-criticism was thought to entail the alignment of aesthetic content and instructional method within a framework of critical diversity. Neither art education theorists (with one notable exception) nor literature education theorists have viewed the alignment of aesthetic and instructional theory as a necessary task.

An analysis of general education theory on the teaching of controversial issues (Chap. 7) led to a conclusion that a coherent pedagogy consists of more than the identification of suitable content and the specification of relevant methods of instruction. Beneath considerations of content ('what') and method ('how') in curriculum planning often lie hidden assumptions as to 'why' such knowledge is valuable. Much of the educational theorizing about controversial issues was found to be directed at the problems involved in teaching 'community-based', as opposed to purely 'academic' or 'subject-based' disputes. In order to apply these theorizings with respect to teaching about controversy in aesthetics, it proved necessary to question the distinction between 'community-based' and 'subject-based' controversy, by showing that in spite of the obvious difference between the 'popular' and 'restricted' contexts in which these kinds of controversies are respectively located, there are good grounds for maintaining a less rigid distinction. The force of the distinction was found to depend on a rationalistic account of knowledge which entails well-defined disciplines, standardised content, and pre-

specified learning outcomes. This was modified by emphasizing instead the revisionary and pluralistic character of knowledge.

Theoretical texts on the teaching of controversial issues in the general curriculum were found to be especially promising as a basis for the 'synthesis' phase of this enquiry because of the emphasis given to the metacritical role of the teacher. This was characterized in different ways, depending on whether the 'teacher' advocated a personal value position over against other positions, maintained an attitude of complete neutrality, or, paradoxically, combined advocacy and impartiality with the aim of transcending factional positions on a given controversy. These three characterizations were examined to establish whether they achieved an alignment of discipline-based theory and instructional theory and could thus serve as models for the present enquiry.

The first of the characterizations was found to involve the alignment of monism (aesthetic theory) and 'pedagogic partisanship' (instructional theory). It was rejected as untenable because it rested on the false assumption that controversy in aesthetics is more apparent than real and could, therefore, be resolved by conceptual analysis. The second characterization involved an alignment of eclecticism (aesthetic theory) and 'pedagogic neutrality' (instructional theory). It was judged to be incoherent because it lacked a principle of unity for combining procedures drawn from competing critical standpoints. The third characterization involved an alignment of pluralism (aesthetic theory) with 'committed impartiality' (instructional theory). This was judged to be superior

because it did full justice to the contestability and multiplicity of critical modes. The unresolvable nature of such fundamental controversy was thought to necessitate an open-minded stance (although this does not prevent the individual from holding strong convictions in a dispute, for such convictions can be both strong and provisional if he or she remains constantly alert to the possibility of new configurations of knowledge). The conclusion was reached that 'committed impartiality' is the teaching stance most compatible with the findings of this research into aesthetic controversy because it fits the prototypic model of the metacritic, that is, one who engages in a genuine pursuit of truth in relation to criticism whilst paradoxically (but not illogically) believing that the resolution of disputes is ultimately unattainable.

At the heart of 'committed impartiality' is the notion of differential support. This implies that the teacher has an ethical as well as an intellectual responsibility both to preserve the viability of different sides of a controversy, whilst at the same time subjecting each one, including his or her own, to critical scrutiny (which, by implication, includes the possibility of negative criticism, at least to some degree). 'Differential support' involves the teacher in the task of identifying criteria by which the validity of different viewpoints can be evaluated, thereby assisting learners to assess, comparatively, the explanatory power of those viewpoints by reference to criticism of individual artworks.

'Committed impartiality', and the differential support it entails, is thought to avoid the pitfall of the teacher engaging in metacriticism

as a purely 'academic' activity unrelated to a first order experience of artworks. It could help to develop learners' appreciation of the integrated character of criticism and aesthetics because it entails 'trying out' different critical approaches with artworks treated as test cases. Hence, as a teaching stance, it has the potential to enrich, cumulatively, the learners' aesthetic appreciation of individual works, whilst at the same time developing their understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of different critical views. It implies that the various intellectual traditions which have given rise to critical modes are necessary foci for pedagogical enquiry: necessary, that is, because the cumulative wisdom gained by studying these traditions can help to increase learners' understanding, not only of individual artworks, but also the complex interrelationships that make up the social world of which artworks are but a part. The teacher's commitment is, therefore, to a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' search for truth. Truth in this sense is a multiple concept: its pursuance involves the teacher in a commitment to enhance the value of the teaching/learning process by leading learners into a richer understanding of the human condition, as opposed to merely providing them with ready-made certainties.

To accept the full implications of teaching fundamental controversy is to engage in a comparative, cumulative study of criticism's plurality and contestability in which 'taken for granted' knowledge concerning artworks is viewed as problematic. Such an approach invites an alignment with the work of critical theorists (Chap. 7.3) whose main aim has been to mount a critique of the relationship between institutional knowledge and socio-political interests, with a view to

proposing radical alternatives. (Although it was pointed out in Chapter 7.3 that a commitment to problematize knowledge does not necessarily imply acceptance of a thoroughgoing social critique.)

Critical theorists, in the past decade, have attacked what they see as the tendency of Western democracies to establish and perpetuate state control through a means/ends model of educational provision in which emphasis is placed firmly on standardized content, pre-specified learning targets, 'technical' knowing, etc. Against this dominant tradition of 'instrumental', or 'technocratic rationality' and its corollaries, the 'technical' models of educational researcher and teacher, critical theorists have proposed alternative forms of rationality in which the model of teacher-as-reflective-practitioner is paramount. In as much as teaching about disputes in aesthetics contributes to reflective teaching and learning, it can be seen to provide a focus for 'empowerment': that is, the development of an independent attitude of thought among teachers which will equip them to interrogate the content of curricula and to raise questions in the minds of learners about the wider society from which that content has arisen. The notion of 'empowerment' in this context has implications both for the personal development of teachers through private reading, informal discussion with like-minded colleagues and local classroom initiatives; moreover, it has implications for art teacher training establishments, especially for those seeking to explore ways of challenging and developing the thinking of student art teachers regarding the value of the analytical/critical, historical/cultural and perceptual domains of art learning.



### 8.3 Metacritical Principles

It is intended now to specify key principles that have arisen from the analyses of different kinds of theory in the previous chapters.<sup>1</sup> These principles, which are elemental to a discussion of metacriticism, will be explored below in the light of their implications for curriculum. They are:

(i) The teaching of metacriticism will involve differentiating between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' orientations of theory in respect of analytical/critical, historical/cultural, and perceptual domains of art experience.

(ii) Artistic intention is a prime focus for teaching metacriticism because it is representative of disputes connected with the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction in aesthetics.

(iii) The teaching of metacriticism will engage learners in a conceptual analysis of the distinction in art criticism between 'description' and 'interpretation'.

(iv) Teaching about controversy in aesthetics would involve giving due consideration to the bearing of perceptual theory on theories of art criticism.

(v) The teaching of metacriticism will aim to develop learners' understanding of the underlying theory of critical discourse, thereby enhancing their direct experience and appreciation of artworks.

(vi) The teaching of metacriticism implies a commitment to question existing structures of knowledge and to provide alternative strategies for creating new ones.

(vii) The teaching of metacriticism entails adopting a pedagogical stance in which discipline-based content and teacher values are explicitly harmonized.

The metacritical principles are especially pertinent to the task of developing curricula in which the four domains of art experience are to be taught as an interactive whole. (As discussed in Chapter 3.3, exploring the dynamic interrelatedness of the four domains, namely, Expressive/Productive, Perceptual, Analytical/Critical, and Historical/Cultural, is axiomatic to 'broadening the base' of art curriculum content.) The point is that metacriticism entails rational

and systematic enquiry into the knowledge bases of all forms of art activity bearing on the problems of criticism. Moreover, the metacritical principles will be formulated below in a way that gives indications, where appropriate, of possible curriculum strategies. There is no doubt, however, that commenting on principles without a particular group of learners in mind is problematic. Considering the variety of contexts in which learning about metacriticism could occur, such as primary school classes, GCE 'A' Level art history sets, individual tutorials for fine art undergraduates, and museum study groups in adult education, it is necessary to limit the following discussion to general implications in the recognition that further research studies and curriculum development will be needed to 'test' the relevance and application of the principles in actual learning environments. Research in that vein would constitute a shift of emphasis from principles to procedures, from theorizing about curriculum content in relation to method (valuable and necessary though that has proved to be) to experimental curriculum development.

Discussion of the principles will be illustrated by reference to relevant examples of classes of artworks. The aim will be to facilitate metacritical comparisons of alternative approaches with reference to underlying theoretical frameworks. More importantly, though, in this context, the works are chosen to illustrate the metacritical principles and each one should be seen as an example of a class or category of items. Hence many other examples relating to the different classes could serve equally as well as those selected. (One such class denotes works for which there is a well documented history of material changes; another class is of works which raise questions

about the bearing of ethical standards on the artist's choice of subject matter.) The choice of classes is not intended to be definitive: others might justifiably be put forward to shed light on further facets of metacriticism latent in the principles. Given the emphasis in Chapter 5 on the need for a broad cultural definition of art, the choice of examples will also include items from outside the Euro-American fine art tradition.

#### 8.4 Curricular Implications

(i) The teaching of metacriticism will involve differentiating between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' orientations of theory in respect of analytical/critical, historical/cultural, and perceptual domains of art experience.

The most pervasive issue to have arisen from this research concerns the problematic distinction in philosophical aesthetics between intrinsic and extrinsic evidence. The distinction is ontological, in that it focuses on disputes over the nature of art and the identification and demarcation of individual works; also it is epistemological, in that it focuses on disputes about critical objectivity in relation to theories of knowledge, perception and truth (Chaps. 4-6). A major outcome of the enquiry is the proposal that a pedagogy of metacriticism depends on achieving a rationale for teaching a range of critical stances (Chap. 6.5). This has emerged, through analyzing the notion of controversy in philosophical aesthetics, as an opposition of extremes (objectivism/relativism, materialism/idealism, etc.) within which middle-ground alternatives may also be located.

A pedagogy of metacriticism would include an exploration of aesthetic controversy concerning the boundaries of artworks. The attendant

difficulties could be demonstrated with reference to a class of works that have undergone material changes over time. The Nightwatch of 1642 by Rembrandt (fig.1, following page) is a particularly intriguing example. Evidence has shown that the painting was reduced in size in 1715 in order to fit it between two doors of a new location (Haverkamp-Begemann, 1982, pp.18-19). Moreover, the title The Nightwatch was not Rembrandt's own: it was coined in the late 18th century partly because '... patrolling at night was virtually the only duty left to the city's militia' (ibid., p.7), but also because the relatively dark painting of 1642 had become considerably darker over time owing to the accumulation of dirt and varnish (ibid., cf. Bolten & Bolten-Rempt, 1978, pp.94-100; Clark, 1978, pp.77-79). Recent restoration work, particularly in 1975/76, has returned the work to something like its original freshness of colour. However, this restoration was extensive in the range of subtle modifications and emendations to the canvas and paint surface (Hijmans, Kuiper & Vels Heijn, 1978, Chap.VII). It revealed the impossibility of retouching damaged and worn parts without adding, artistically speaking, to the original. Whether or not it matters aesthetically that this painting has changed in significant ways (the question of authenticity is particularly raised by restoration work) depends on the viewer's beliefs about the nature of art. Those who adopt a formalist viewpoint tend to emphasize the self-referentiality and particularity of a work as experienced at a given point in time. Contextualists, on the other hand, view it as an entity that is impossible to disentangle from the influence of spatial, temporal, and physical conditions. The 350 year history of The Nightwatch reveals something of the vicissitudes to which many works are subject during their 'careers'

FIGURE 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, The Nightwatch (detail), 1642, Oil on Canvas, 144 in. x 172½ in. (orig. c. 152½ in. x 197 in.). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

(Michelangelo's 'Pieta', for example, has recently undergone similar treatment). A well-documented work such as this can supply an apt focus for comparing and contrasting different concepts and methods of criticism. Such engagement would be directed to pointing out the inconsistencies of extreme formalist and contextualist positions whilst seeking to combine the strengths of each, namely, that artworks (in the visual arts) are physically real and yet culturally defined within a living artistic tradition.

Problems of definition and individuation arise not just in respect of material changes in the artwork over time, but also with reference to what might be called the relocation of works from one culture to another. At issue here is the appropriateness of applying the concept 'artwork' to a class of works that are alien or unfamiliar, as is the case with many non-Western cultural products.<sup>2</sup> This is linked in turn to the interpretive task of determining the aesthetic relevance of meanings assigned to such products. An example of alternative interpretations would be that of, say, a European explorer who unwittingly treats a tribal magic stick as tinder for making fire. Such an individual would be acting as much in accordance with cultural patterns of behaviour as the tribespeople for whom it is an object of veneration. If this principle is applied to the identification of artworks, then it is clear that the capacity to recognize a particular material entity as art (or, conversely, not to recognize it as such) is a function of each person's cultural consciousness. The process of enculturation by which the mores of a culture are impressed on the individual's consciousness, may actually incapacitate that individual from 'seeing' the works of alien cultural traditions as 'art.' This

incapacity may apply, not only to the more esoteric conventions of artistic production, but to supposedly unproblematic manifestations as well (see, for example, fig.2). A pedagogy of metacriticism would involve reflecting on the kinds of extreme positions associated with the task of confronting such works (and, by extension, supposedly less accessible works 'closer to home'). It could be shown that the extent to which assigned meanings are culture-specific or transcend spatio-temporal categories is open to debate (Chap. 4.4.3., above). It could also be pointed out that the Primitivism typified by artists such as Picasso and Braque effectively imposed stereotypical values onto works such as tribal masks (Hughes, 1991, pp.20-21). Their notions of formal vitality, plastic freedom, and expressive distortion tended to obscure the conventional, ritualistic functions of masks (as has been documented since by numerous anthropological studies). Primitivist misconceptions about non-Western cultural traditions can be perpetuated by the manner of exhibiting so-called tribal art. In this connection, a likely pedagogical strategy might involve speculation about the nonmaterial changes a tribal artefact undergoes when wrested from its origins and placed in a museum it serves as an object either of curiosity or contemplation: functions for which it almost certainly would not have been created.

Many contemporary artists work within a global ethos emanating from the Western fine art tradition, whereas others work within the limits of local, indigenous, non-Western craft traditions. The localized exclusivity of many artists, whether of Western or non-Western provenance, may easily be compromised by their products being exhibited on a par with works from a diversity of places and periods.

FIGURE 2. Mask of turtle-shell, Torres Straits (Papua New Guinea),  
British Museum



Indeed, such individuals would probably be interested to learn that their 'discourse' was one of many equally meritorious strands constituting 'world culture.' It could be argued that the 'marketplace of ideas' concept of world culture is valid only to the extent that the various positions represented are there by choice; although this argument could only be applied to contemporary artists and not to those of earlier periods. Whereas the 'art' products of many Third World societies speak with an authentic voice to their own social groups, they may have nothing to say to outsiders, and vice versa. In curriculum terms, questions might thus be raised as to the effects on the perception of art when the context of a work's presentation displays insensitivity to the context of its production. This would involve scrutinising the influence on critical reception of what Barthes has called the work's 'channel of transmission' (Barrett, 1985, p.52). The implication here is that contextual knowledge is not merely a question of becoming better informed about circumstances of production. The term 'cultural context' should also designate knowledge about the contexts of transmission and reception with reference to both the host culture and that of the viewers.

In summary, the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction is an important focus for eliciting an examination of aesthetic issues concerning the nature of art and critical responses to art. Ontological problems could be highlighted by works in which the question of authenticity is prominent. Works from unfamiliar belief systems, such as tribal masks, can be used to explore the links between product, producer, audience and presentational context. This would involve reflecting on the relevance of all such factors when seeking to define objects as

art or to assign meanings and speculate about aesthetic value and significance.

(ii) Artistic intention is a prime focus for teaching metacriticism because it is representative of disputes connected with the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction in aesthetics.

A major outcome of the enquiry reported in Chapter 6 was that appeals to artistic intention in critical disputes reveal different sets of assumptions about the nature of art in regard to whether contextual knowledge is essential, more or less helpful, or irrelevant to aesthetic judgments concerning specific works. In a pedagogy of metacriticism, artistic intention would serve as a catalyst for exploring the interrelationship of the concepts 'artwork' and 'cultural context.' This would bring to the fore competing arguments at the heart of the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction over what is meant by the appearance of the art object.

Consistent with the emphasis in this research on defining controversy as an opposition of extremes, the problems raised by artistic intention could be used to facilitate a metacritical examination of two irreconcilable positions in the theory of criticism, each of which enshrines an important truth, but fails to provide a fully satisfactory account of aesthetic experience (see Chap. 6.3). Anti-intentionalists rightly emphasize that aesthetic experience is primarily directed to the materiality of the artwork. Intentionalists, with equal justification, stress the necessity of background information about the artist for many of the judgments that are made about specific works (assuming that the 'aesthetic' is not restricted to a sensuous experiencing of formal properties, but

includes the appreciation of ideas, values, etc. communicated through the medium of art).

A curriculum based on principles of metacriticism would involve differentiating three types of evidence relating to the issue of intention: (1) 'internal' evidence available solely through consulting the work, (2) biographical evidence of direct relevance, and (3) biographical evidence of indirect relevance. The difficulties attending this differentiation (leaving aside the question of the reliability of documentary evidence in given cases) can be demonstrated with reference to two broad categories, namely, abstract configurations that symbolize precise culture-specific meanings (type 2 evidence, e.g., fig.3) and items which appear to be merely decorative (e.g., kaleidoscope patterns). The words underlined indicate the complexities at the heart of this comparison: for, though the iconography of, for example, a William Morris wallpaper pattern may have no definite communicable content, it nevertheless looks the way it does because of the ideological commitments that are known to underpin that designer's intentions in a general sense (type 3 evidence). The kinds of looking generated by such comparisons would serve to demonstrate the bearing of intentionalist expectations on aesthetic judgments. The anti-intentionalist claim that if an artist's intention is not apparent in the work it is therefore irrelevant, may be countered, not just by pointing to the necessity of corroborative biographical evidence in certain cases, but by recognizing that the question of intention is implicit in the initial encounter with works of art.



From the seed-jar hole in the center (sic), representing the sipapu, or mythical hole in the earth, the Hopis emerged from the underworld. Hands reaching out (1) represent the Hopis and all other living things coming into this world. The womb of mother earth (2) is flanked by other lines (3) signifying the spirits of all unborn people entering the world. The four corners of the earth (4) surround the eye of the Great Spirit (5), itself centered in the wings (6) and head (7) of an eagle. Four rows of triangles (8) indicate the Hopis' reverence for groupings of four.

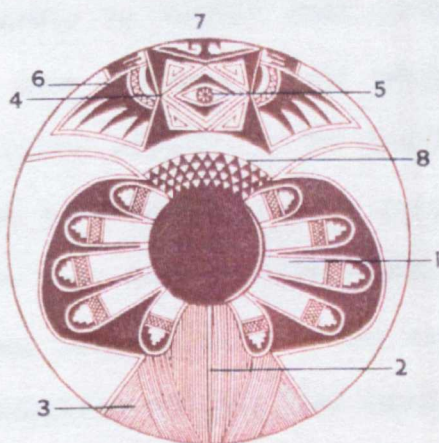


FIGURE 3. Dextra Quotskuyva, Modern Pueblo Pottery (Hopi tribe).  
Source: National Geographic, Nov. 1982, pp.602-603

The impossibility of separating the artwork from its cultural context may be illustrated, though, by considering the relevance of direct biographical evidence to the subject of intention. A direct, unassisted attempt, for example, to interpret Hardy's photograph (fig.4) of an incident in the Korean War could be accompanied by the introduction of biographical information such as the following:

The world was invited to see an American soldier 'share his last drop of water with a dying peasant'. It was one of the most telling pictures of the Korean War. But this poignant situation was not quite what it seemed. The soldier had to be persuaded by the photographer, the celebrated Bert Hardy. And he agreed only on condition that Hardy's own water ration was used. (Evans, 1978, p.40).

This photograph, which purports to be spontaneous, but is not, involves a measure of deception which almost certainly could not be detected solely through consulting the work.<sup>3</sup> Against this point, it might be maintained that Hardy's intention was to produce a telling visual metaphor of what he felt was true of American soldiers in general. Therefore, the apparent callousness of the G.I. who took part in the photograph, and Hardy's own manipulation of the event, are, on this view, a matter of indifference to the issue of intention. Nevertheless, it can hardly be denied that background information about this photograph does yield a fresh perspective. Through considering the art-historical context, it is possible to approach the work more critically and to discover a wider range of implications, particularly those which bear on the relationship between moral and aesthetic judgements (see Chap. 5.5). It can hardly be tenable to maintain that external knowledge of this item impairs one's perception of the image: to suggest as much is to place a premium on ignorance.

FIGURE 4. Bert Hardy, Korean War, Picture Post (Hulton Picture Company). 1950, Photograph.



(See also critical analysis of Ben Shahn's Farewell to New York - All that is Beautiful in Rawding, 1984, pp.43-46.)

A metacritical approach would involve making connections between different views of the nature of (artistic) reality and the validity of evidence that is directly accessible to sense perception. For example, it could be shown that positivist preconceptions about the dependability of visual 'facts' are open to challenge on the grounds that neither the photographer, the soldier in the photograph, nor the critic are value-neutral participants. From the art curriculum standpoint, however, the notions of 'committed impartiality' and 'teacher-as-reflective-practitioner' imply that a strongly anti-positivist or anti-empiricist stance should be avoided (see Chap. 7.5). Rather, the strengths and weaknesses of different positions could be elicited by, for instance, contrasting analytical empiricism with the phenomenologist's insistence on the 'speaking power of the work' communicated in the immediacy of experience. The importance of artistic tradition in shaping expectations of a work would be analytically significant.

Cases of type 3 evidence of intention can be adduced with reference to a class of artworks for which indirect biographical evidence is readily available. Bruegel's The Conversion of St. Paul (fig.5), for example, is a work that has attracted scholarly comment on how to interpret its meaning in relation to what is known about the artist's life. A consideration of the picture's mountainous setting, coupled with the fact that in the year it was painted the Duke of Alba led an army through the Alps with the object of subduing the Low Countries,

FIGURE 5. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Conversion of St Paul, 1567, Panel, 42½ in. x 61½ in. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



raises questions about Bruegel's intentions, particularly when it is made in the light of knowledge concerning the artist's attitude to life and his views on the social function of art (e.g., Foote, 1968, pp.104-105). More pointedly, when the sheer size of the army in the painting is taken into account, and a comparison is made between the central figure on the horse and the bearded horseman in the same artist's Massacre of the Innocents (who some scholars identify as the Duke of Alba), the conclusion is strongly suggested that Bruegel was drawing a parallel between the Catholic persecution of northern Protestants and Jewish persecutions of the early church. Whether or not this interpretation is plausible therefore depends on a knowledge of general historical background and the artistic themes and modes of representation typical of the artist. Intentionalist conclusions in such cases cannot be confined to notions of the autonomy of a particular painting.

The controversy over artistic intention is a prime focus for teaching metacriticism, because it can be used to identify competing critical approaches to specific works whilst, concurrently, permitting links to be drawn between these approaches and broad theoretical positions in aesthetics. The nature of background knowledge, whether directly or indirectly related to the artist's intentions, has an important bearing on the curricular implication which follows.

(iii) The teaching of metacriticism will engage learners in a conceptual analysis of the distinction in art criticism between 'description' and 'interpretation'.

The equivocal nature of this distinction could be illustrated by a contrast between examples of two categories of artworks, namely, those

that call for description and little interpretation with those that require a largely interpretive approach. Alternatively, 'What is (minimally) descriptively true of a particular work' could be contrasted with 'What is (certainly) interpretively imputed to it' (Margolis, 1980a, p.127). This would involve differentiating two ways of understanding the term 'interpretation', that is, between, on the one hand, a critic's discriminatory ability in detecting subtle detail in an artwork and, on the other, a critic's literary skill in responding impressionistically to a work's emotive power. (See Chap. 5.3).

The problem of distinguishing between description and interpretation might be demonstrated with reference to a work such as Landscape with The Fall of Icarus c.1558, by Bruegel the Elder (fig.6). Bertram's (1949, pp.5-6) comment on this work that '... the shepherd stares idly at the sky, but in the wrong direction' (p.6, emphases added) is a description with an interpretive gloss. Substitute the word 'idly' with 'intently', or remove it altogether, and the meaning of the sentence is subtly altered. The point is that although straightforwardly descriptive statements (e.g., 'the man is staring upwards') are focused on the particularities of the picture, they are nevertheless integral to and simultaneous with the critic's larger project to develop a holistic understanding of the artist's works in relation to art itself. In the current example, straightforwardly descriptive statements aimed at keeping an 'open mind' and remaining true to the 'facts' of observation presuppose the critic's interest in the 'how' and the 'why' of the shepherd's staring. It is difficult to see how the effort to describe this work can be divorced from

FIGURE 6. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Landscape with The Fall of Icarus, c. 1558, Canvas, 29 in. x 44 1/4 in. Musees Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

knowledge of Ovid's story, which has both shepherd and ploughman looking upwards in wonderment, or of Bruegel's smaller version of the same scene which shows Daedalus clearly visible in the sky (Stechow, 1990, pp.50-51, fig.7). What bearing knowledge of the smaller 'Icarus' would have on a critic's efforts to describe the larger is a matter of speculation. The point is that specialist knowledge of an artist's oeuvre inevitably shapes the description of a single piece. Moreover, it raises questions about the ontological status of artworks separately conceived, for if critical descriptions are culturally informed, then claims for textual autonomy must be treated with some caution (cf. Rawding, 1984, pp.43-48). The realisation that Bruegel typically hides the iconographical centre of his pictures in masses of detail (Lindsay & Huppé, 1956, cf. fig.5) will guide the learner/critic's efforts at description by ensuring from the outset that parts are related to wholes.

The need to distinguish two senses of 'interpretation' was noted by Margolis with regard to a painting by Matisse (fig.8):

But what shall one say of Matisse's The Piano Lesson? I may point out to you the witty features of Matisse's painting: for example, the relations between the implicit movement of the metronome on the piano; the elimination of one of the boy's eyes by a diagonal, flesh-colored brush stroke - so that we understand his attention to be metronomically flicking back and forth between the open French windows and the piano keyboard; the slash of brilliant green color through the windows, that diagonally captures a part of the attention of the young pianist and confirms the field of play beyond; the window's being open in contrast to the imprisoning presence of the piano; the relaxed sensual sculpture by Matisse himself placed on a foreground table before the open windows, in contrast with an unfinished painting, also by Matisse, which is very angular and severe, and ambiguously placed behind the boy at the piano to suggest an unpleasantly enforced lesson. If I point out these features, which perhaps you had not considered or that might be relatively difficult to confirm decisively, you might concede that I had interpreted the painting

FIGURE 7. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Fall of Icarus, c. 1558,  
Panel, 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. x 35 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Private Collection.

FIGURE 8. Henri Matisse, The Piano Lesson, 1916, Oil on Canvas,  $96\frac{1}{2}$  in. x  $83\frac{3}{4}$  in. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

satisfactorily; you might also, I admit, say that I had merely described the painting more accurately than another. Would there be a difference in speaking in these two ways?  
(Margolis, 1980a, pp.121-122, emphases added)

The task of describing the Matisse appears reasonably straightforward, whereas in the Bruegel (fig.5), close observational skills are needed to detect details, such as the corpse under the hedge ('not visible in small reproductions,' Lindsay & Huppé, op. cit., p.383; cf. Bertram, op. cit., p.6). Nevertheless, though some of the details noted by Margolis are readily open to scrutiny, others, while also visible, seem to depend on the viewer forming hypotheses about the symbolic meaning of different parts of the picture in relation to its formal structure. The triangular composition (Schneider, 1984, p.328) is evident, but whether the relationship between the various angular shapes is anything more than a formal device for unifying the picture is open to speculation. The introduction of biographical information, however, provides a different perspective on the interpretation of the painting (ibid., pp.328-329): the boy is Matisse's son Pierre; he appears younger than he was at the time the painting was produced; he had been 'destined for music' by his father even to the extent of having his formal education cut short to concentrate on the violin; he was hankering to leave the family 'nest'; he was determined, as soon as he came of age, to join the army and fight at the front. Such information is germane to the point that a critic's capacity to see and describe is subtly affected by the knowledge which he or she possesses.

A comparison of interpretive accounts based first on intrinsic evidence and then on a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic evidence can facilitate a careful consideration of the descriptive/interpretive

function of critical discourse. However, the validity of aesthetic interpretations depends on the interpreter achieving 'compatibility with the describable features of given artworks' and conforming with 'the relativized canons of interpretation' arising from the traditions of professional criticism (Margolis, op. cit., p.163). Critical texts can be used to focus on the tendency in criticism for different canons of interpretation to be used in support of radically divergent interpretations of a single work. These canons ('interpretive schemata' or 'world-views') could be identified and their strengths and weaknesses assessed in regard to the interpretation of different kinds of artwork.

(iv) Teaching about controversy in aesthetics would involve giving due consideration to the bearing of perceptual theory on theories of art criticism.

Exploring the problems of aesthetic criticism involves examining different positions on the relationship between the nature of reality and the interpretive activity of percipients. The relevance of perceptual theory is made apparent by comparing Allison's influential Four Domains Model of art education with the Getty Institute's equally influential DBAE scheme. These coincide on three counts, namely, art production, art criticism, and history of art, but differ on the fourth; 'perceptual domain' (Allison) and 'aesthetics' (DBAE). This discrepancy suggests that theoretical work is needed on the part of art educators (researchers, teacher-researchers, and teachers) in order to elucidate the connections between perception and aesthetics from philosophical as well as psychological and sociological perspectives, but with the contexts of teaching clearly in mind.



The bearing of culturally acquired expectations on the perception of art may be demonstrated with reference to the critical and historical reception of a class of works such as artistic forgeries: for example, Christ at Emmaus, 1336, by Hans van Meegeren (fig.9), which was enthusiastically received as a Vermeer by art connoisseurs in the 1930s. Its discoverer was the respected Vermeer scholar Abraham Bredius:

It is a wonderful moment in the life of a lover of Vermeer when he finds himself suddenly confronted with a hitherto unknown painting by a great master, untouched, on the original canvas, and without any restoration, just as it left the painter's studio.

(Wright, 1976, p.80)

In less than a decade, though, Christ at Emmaus and several other paintings attributed to Vermeer were exposed as forgeries. Van Meegeren was imprisoned for his deception.

The unmasking of a forgery may change the perception of the work. People do not just feel differently about it, they may see it in a significantly new way. With hindsight, critical attempts may be made to explain away an original judgment by claiming that a work is technically poor (Wheelock, 1981, pp.47-49; Meyer, 1967, pp.54-55). Alternatively, the claim may be made that knowledge that a work is a forgery should not impugn our appreciation of its aesthetic qualities because these are intrinsic and thus not subject to the vagaries of cultural taste (Meyer, op. cit., p.65). Both positions would seem to be overstated, however, and may be identified with extremes in perceptual theory (see above Chap. 6.3.3) and in philosophy (Meyer, for example, links belief in the objectivity of 'beauty,' i.e., as an attribute independent of the need for perception, with Platonic

FIGURE 9. Hans van Meegeren, Christ at Emmaus, 1936, Oil on Canvas,  
46 in. x 50 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

idealism). A pedagogy of metacriticism would include the need for discussion of the respective merits of extreme positions on the artistic status of forged paintings. In such a discussion, reference could be made to underlying presuppositions about aesthetic value in respect of wider questions about the relationship of knowledge and perception. In particular, it would be important to recognise that the values and meanings of an artistic object change over time and according to location. Questions might be raised about the nature of perceptual experience. Are meanings resident in objects, projected onto the object by the viewer, or arrived at by a process of negotiation between object and viewer (Hamblen, 1985, p.22)? Aside from extremes, metacriticism offers the potential for exploring the extent to which '... even the most rigorous (art-historical) research' can, in cases such as the Van Meegeren, '... be affected by interests, feelings, and cultural attitudes' (Villa, 1981, p.96). The effect of cultural attitudes and beliefs on perception also extends to emotional and physiological responses (Meyer, op. cit., p.56). Visually identical objects, such as a house facade in a stage set and the front elevation of a real house, will appear different when the observer has knowledge of their separate identities (Searle, 1983, pp.54-55). As these examples illustrate, it may be important to consider the extent to which expectations can influence perception.<sup>4</sup>

It was earlier concluded (Chap. 5.5) that '... the widest possible range of factors should be seen as relevant to the perception of artworks and to the judgments that are made concerning them.' The point is not only that contextual knowledge shapes aesthetic perception, but that the various facets of such knowledge are

pedagogically interesting. Part of a strategy of metacriticism here may involve considering situations in art criticism which highlight what Becker (1982, p.305) has called '... the close relation between aesthetic and moral beliefs.' Comparisons might be drawn between classes of works which in different ways force learners to examine their own presuppositions about what constitutes aesthetic perception. The issue of artistic sincerity in the case of a forged painting such as the Van Meegeren (fig.9) may seem irrelevant to some because the deception was perpetrated against the art establishment. After all, a change of attribution makes no difference to the formal properties of this and other forgeries. On the other hand, documentary photographs such as Hardy's (fig.4 above) raise this issue emphatically, because the manipulation of formal properties in the artwork occurs in circumstances which are tragically real. Here the argument that in art the end justifies the means seems unconvincing, whereas in cases such as that of the fine artist who employs a prostitute to model for a painting of the Virgin Mary it may be more readily conceded. A variant of the class of works typified by the Hardy photograph would be Diane Arbus's photographic studies of misfits and deviants (e.g., fig.10), which raise few if any questions of artistic sincerity, though they nevertheless place the viewer in the uncomfortable position of voyeur. Is it curiosity that attracts attention, or is it the formal beauty of the photographer's art? Questions relating to such images can provide an opportunity to clarify the meaning of the term aesthetic in relation to perception. Restricting the aesthetic to formal considerations is problematic because it is difficult to maintain a disinterested attitude towards works which are inescapably bound up with moral questions of various kinds, especially those works which tackle

FIGURE 10. Diane Arbus, Russian midget friends in a living room on 100th Street, N.Y.C. (detail), 1963, Photograph.

contentious issues directly (e.g. Mapplethorpe's 'The Perfect Moment' photography exhibition). Alternatively, the aesthetic might be identified with reference to a wide range of factors that contribute to and help sustain a meaningful encounter with a given work.

Artworks which can serve as a catalyst for discussions about the relation of moral and aesthetic concerns have outstanding potential as a focus for teaching metacriticism. Such works might be employed to engage feelings as well as intellects and could thereby link problems of philosophical aesthetics with the kinds of controversies described in Chapter 7.2 above as 'community-based.' Conceived thus, metacriticism has an educational value far beyond the confines of 'subject-based' art learning.

(v) The teaching of metacriticism will aim to develop learners' understanding of the underlying theory of critical discourse, thereby enhancing their direct experience and appreciation of artworks.

Existing schemes for teaching art criticism were described in Chapter 3 as relatively lacking in theoretical input. But in principle there is no necessary contradiction between critical enquiry in learning situations being directly experiential and strongly theoretical. The analysis of aesthetic controversy in the research as a whole indicates that it is necessary for criticism to be theoretically well-grounded if it is to achieve its full potential as a focus for art learning. Although it has been philosophers in the main who have troubled themselves with problems in aesthetics rather than artists or critics, it would be odd if studying this kind of material did not lead to an enhanced understanding of art: that is, via the perspective of philosophy. A strategy is needed with which to explore differences in

content and methods found in philosophical aesthetics. The term 'strategy' need not imply a prescriptive approach: for example, critical theory (in the technical sense) encourages the formulation of principles rather than procedures for thinking critically (Ross & Hannay, 1986, p.10; cf. Lankford, 1984).

Pedagogical strategies in criticism lead to the critical appreciation of art for its own sake (in criticism the intrinsic value of a dialogical experience of actual works is paramount), whereas pedagogical strategies in metacriticism, by definition, treat critical appreciation more as something to be commented upon rather than fully entered into. This definition of metacriticism in curriculum contexts is consistent with Margolis's (1980b, p.9) claim that aesthetics is a 'peculiarly strategic discipline' for the investigation of general philosophical disputes. His point that artworks supply 'marvellously apt examples' with which to activate and illuminate such investigation is especially pertinent. This is to affirm that artworks can be used as test cases for exploring the interrelations of philosophy, aesthetics and art criticism. A similar proposal has been made by Eaton (1984, p.55) for combining philosophy and criticism in the teaching of A' Level examinations in English on the grounds that students of literature tend to '... glibly employ terms such as good, great, successful, contrived, trite' with little understanding of their meaning and significance in ethics and aesthetics. The implied pedagogical strategy led Hamblen (1985, p.20) to affirm the educational potential of developing adult learners' 'aesthetic literacy' through examining artworks in relation to problems in the philosophy of art over defining '... the nature of art, attitudes towards art, and

reasons for aesthetic response.' In the light of these comments, and the philosopher Searle's (1983, p.54) insistence that cultural skills associated with perception are 'linguistically impregnated,' there is good reason to believe that metacriticism, with its emphasis on analysing critical discourse, is potentially a means of developing a capacity for art appreciation.

A major implication of the analysis of aesthetic controversy in this research is that to teach criticism without reference to underlying aesthetic theories is likely to be superficial for the same reason that teaching pupils to paint in a particular style without making them aware of the artistic context from which it had originated would also be considered superficial, or at least less than ideal. In this connection, Kaelin (1989) has argued that criticism ought to be taught from within a metacritical and metatheoretical perspective. Hence, in view of the variety of definitions of criticism which could be put forward by critics and aestheticians, the teaching of metacriticism would seem to be an essential element in what is termed 'critical studies' (Chap 3.3).

(vi) The teaching of metacriticism implies a commitment to question existing structures of knowledge and to provide alternative strategies for creating new ones.

This is a particularly difficult point to extract. It refers to arguments discussed in Chapter 7 and reiterated above (Chap. 8.2) concerning a supposed link between the content and methods of metacriticism and the notion of teacher 'empowerment.' It is thought likely that the questioning attitude typical of the metacritic will be reflected in the approach of one who adopts the model of teacher-as-



metacritic. The overriding aim of such an approach would be '... to interrogate the content of curricula and to raise questions about the wider society from which that content has arisen' (Chap. 8.2). From an art education standpoint, this would involve scrutinizing artworks in relation to underlying theories of criticism in recognition that the values and interests associated with artworks are typically complex and indirect, and that it is not easy in practice to unravel their multi-layered strands of meaning. A metacritical approach could involve comparing the early critical reception of an artist's work with later statements in order to reflect on the factors, some aesthetic, some not, leading to artistic recognition. The most revealing comparisons would not be those relating to artists who had been first vilified and then praised (most of the Impressionists, Van Gogh, Kandinsky, etc.), but vice versa. Questions might be raised concerning the tendency in much recent art criticism to assume the unsullied sincerity of established artists. Why should it be thought inappropriate to refer in art criticism to reasons such as 'He did it for the money'? (Baldwin, Harrison, & Ramsden, 1981, p.442). Critics will more likely refer to an individual as obsessively haunted by recurring themes and images than suggest that he or she is 'short on ideas' or is working self-indulgently. Hence the curriculum would need to give some emphasis to scrutinizing statements of art critics with a view to exposing underlying assumptions through an enquiry into the '... causes and conditions of artistic production' (ibid.), with particular reference to the links between artists, dealers, galleries, critics, and the art public.

It is posited that teaching metacriticism with reference to controversy in aesthetics will encourage independent critical thinking because it will draw attention to the world views or ideological stances that underlie different conceptions of aesthetic criticism. Hence, such teaching should aim not only to explore the relationship between art and society, but also to make connections at the metatheoretical level between problems in the realm of aesthetics and in other areas of knowledge. Studying controversial issues in aesthetics, although perhaps only within the capability of some, would nevertheless make some small step towards increasing critical awareness in society and would thus make a modest contribution to the democratization of knowledge on which the health of a free society depends.

(vii) The teaching of metacriticism entails adopting a pedagogical stance in which discipline-based content and teacher values are explicitly harmonized.

Although teacher values underlie all forms of pedagogical practice, these may remain unexamined and undisclosed where the teaching of non-controversial aspects of a subject are concerned. In this connection, it is quite possible for individuals to teach efficiently a programme of study which either they do not believe in or perhaps have no enthusiasm for. On the other hand, the teaching of controversial content necessitates consideration by the teacher of his or her personal viewpoint, irrespective of whether it is hidden from view, openly declared, or presented in any of a number of more subtle ways. The teaching of controversial issues is clearly facilitated when teachers are well informed about the background beliefs which shape their views not only of art but of the nature of reality. In this connection, earlier analyses of controversy in philosophy and

aesthetics are particularly relevant. For example, discussion of the incommensurability thesis (Chap 4.4.3) led to the conclusion that extreme epistemological positions should be avoided. On the one hand, the meanings and values of alien traditions (including artistic ones) were found not to be mutually incomprehensible but to exhibit some degree of regularity by which intercommunication is made possible. On the other hand, the impossibility that one tradition or system of thought might comprehend entirely in its own terms another system of thought suggests that openness and non-prejudicial attitudes of enquiry should characterize the teaching of metacriticism. Again, this is likely to be facilitated when teachers eschew extremes without at the same time succumbing to an easy-going neutrality. Testing the validity of critical claims and theories that underlie them might properly characterize a pedagogical commitment that is constantly renewed. The art teacher who engages in metacritical enquiry almost by definition would be committed to a form of neutrality which exposes his or her own views (as indeed any views) on the relation of art and criticism to scrutiny and debate.

There is a paradox here in that the (art) teacher - an ostensibly authoritarian figure - is being cast in a decidedly anti-authority role. For to encourage learners to question the status quo appears, at least on the face of it, to be a subversive activity. The point is, though, that nothing is to be lost by questioning the underlying assumptions of curriculum knowledge: that which is philosophically well-grounded will withstand reasoned scrutiny; conversely, the ideologically dubious will be revealed in its true colours. An outcome of the enquiry into teaching controversy in general educational theory

was that the notion of controversy involves a close consideration of the role of the teacher (see Chap. 7.5). It was suggested that this could be best characterized as the role model of a 'reflective practitioner' whose authority was that of a subject specialist committed to the pursuit of truth both within and across subject boundaries. Such a characterization implies a teacher whose role is authoritative rather than authoritarian.

In this connection, the concept of 'learner' implies not merely a passive recipient of received wisdom, but an active participant in a process of examining, philosophically, the discourse of art and criticism. This would involve using and reflecting upon different 'language formats' (Congdon, 1987) in art criticism with a view to increasing the awareness of learners at different age and ability levels regarding the place of language in shaping aesthetic experience. More widely, the aim of inculcating a metacritical attitude would be to provide a conceptual framework within which to ask questions about ways of making and perceiving the world, not only in art, but, by extension, in other areas of the curriculum.

### 8.5 Summary

The synthesis of arguments which forms the basis of this chapter has led to a statement of implications that are deemed relevant to the field of art education in the U.K. These have been stated generally in the form of a series of 'conceptualizations' of issues that have emerged during the overall progress of the research. A detailed application of the content underlying the issues lies beyond the scope of this research, although some indication of the factors likely to be

involved in teaching such content has been given (Chap. 8.3 above). Indeed, the particular contribution of this research to the field of art education is revealed at the points where issues are formulated as condensed conceptualizations of theory, namely, the propositions arising from the analysis of problems in aesthetics (Appendix III), the curricular implications speculated on in Chapters 4-6, and the more specific curricular implications contained in the present chapter. A basis for detailed curriculum development is latent in the various 'implications' that have arisen. It is concluded, though, that such development must attempt to link concepts and methods in aesthetics to broader educational aims within which instructional theory and, particularly in the case of younger learners, developmental theory should be taken into account. A detailed outworking of these implications would constitute a significant contribution to current art education theory and practice, not merely in the realm of 'critical studies', but with reference to the study of art overall.

## CHAPTER 9

### IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH IN THE UK

#### 9.1 Introduction

The curricular implications set forth in the previous chapter represented an attempt to suggest ways of applying principles that had emerged from the analyses of different kinds of theory reported elsewhere in the study. The main purpose of this final chapter is to restate the key issues underpinning these principles and to comment on the implications of the principles for curriculum development in a more general sense. The point here is that subject-specific content, such as the teaching of aesthetic controversy, is relevant to a wide range of concerns both within and beyond the field of art education. Comments concerning wider relevance have been made already (Chap. 8.3; Implications vi & vii): however, these will now be extended to make reference to some aspects of current art education provision. The chapter will include a brief reflection on the effectiveness of the research approach adopted in this study as a whole, together with observations about its potential value for other (art) education researchers, and will conclude with suggestions about possible avenues of future research.

#### 9.2 Reflective Criticism of the Research Method

There is an implied obligation for research conducted for a research degree to show evidence of the student having acquired attitudes and

competencies which extend beyond the chosen topic (Allison, 1990). In this study the analysis of educational research theory in Chapter 2 was an attempt to explore a range of positions with a view to identifying the basis for a suitable method. However, in the absence of precedents in the research literature, it proved necessary to derive this synthetically with reference to a number of related strands associated with Pearse's (1983) Interpretive/Hermeneutic and Critical/Theoretic paradigms of art education research. The task of establishing continuity with existing research traditions was felt to be necessary to counter any suggestion that the present study is an isolated 'one-off' project. It is worth pointing out with renewed emphasis that the topic (i.e., exploring the curricular implications of aesthetic controversy) is rooted in, and adds a new perspective to, an ongoing programme of British research in the area of 'critical studies' (Allison, *op. cit.*, pp.9-10). Indeed, the present research builds upon an earlier study (Rawding, 1984). The difference between the present study and earlier studies into the educational value of art criticism is that it involves not only a new emphasis on philosophical aesthetics, but a close alignment of a research topic with a method of investigation. On the one hand, delineating a research method (as reported in Chapter 2) set the scene for the subsequent analyses of different kinds of theory which were conducted with the aim of reaching a cumulative, synthetic understanding of the conceptual problems involved. On the other hand, this synthesis of ideas and the resulting formulation of curricular principles could be

seen to cast light on problems of research method. Because of these two positions, metacriticism permeated the whole enterprise.

This reflection on method refers primarily to conclusions reached in the summary of Chapter 2. For though parallels were drawn then between metacriticism as method and metacriticism as topic, two other possible 'models' which are analogous to metacriticism were also considered, namely, 'dialectical procedure' and 'methodology.' Comments on each of these in turn will help to focus on the implications of metacriticism for art education research.

With hindsight, the research could not be described as dialectical in the sense epitomised by, for example, Margolis who sought to develop his thesis through a gradual refinement of theory which consisted of alternately analyzing issues in confrontation with the writings of other theorists and resolving points of disagreement synthetically. Rather, the present study has been at one remove from the 'cut and thrust' of this kind of philosophical debate. Theoretical 'synthesizers' such as Margolis, Bernstein, and Rorty were consulted rather than seminal sources in philosophy because this class of philosophers offered access to what, at the start of the research, was an unfamiliar and daunting field of scholarship. The drawback of relying on philosophers who adopt a macro-theoretical view of the problems of their discipline is that, unlike the philosophers themselves, the educational researcher may seem to be sidestepping the need to achieve micro-theoretical understanding. 'Dialectical procedure' is thus particularly suited to the kind of detailed



analysis characteristic of an essentially philosophical study. Alternatively, it is suited to the hermeneutic analysis of concepts in relation to phenomena, such as might be expected in a study aimed at clarifying curricular issues through a continual interweaving of thought and action in specific learning contexts. Nevertheless, though the present research was neither theory-intensive nor truly phenomenological, the method used can be classed as dialectical because it involved an interactive process of analysis and synthesis aimed at opening up new avenues for curriculum development and research. In this respect, the gradual refinement of theoretical understanding and the emergence of ideas reflected more a process of drawing connections between different kinds of theory than that of successively challenging and then assimilating the ideas of individual theorists or schools of thought. Hence the model of 'dialectical procedure' proved to be particularly apt. Rather than 'falling between the stools' of decisively analytic or phenomenological modes of enquiry, the adoption of this method has led to the development of a framework of ideas which could be considered basic to future research in these more specialised senses.

As far as the present research is concerned, it is acknowledged that the quality of the synthesis in Chapter 8 is largely dependent on the quality of analysis achieved in respect of the various kinds of theory. In this connection, the dialectical approach adopted in the research revealed issues which, on reflection, are thought to require further clarification. For example, the bearing of perceptual theory on the criticism of works of literature and art requires more analysis

from within opposing points of view of each field of theory before a satisfactory synthesis of this aspect of the content of the research can be achieved. The value of 'dialectical procedure' as adopted in this research is that it reveals the range of complex issues which the study of art and culture entails. In that sense, it is analogous to map-making: it involves marking out the territory selectively in order that later expeditions can explore it in more detail. In brief, 'dialectical procedure' provides a useful analogue of the kind of approach to theory which characterizes this enquiry as a whole. The research 'lesson' which has been learned is that whilst comprehensiveness and eclecticism seem to be well served by this procedure, the excursions into detailed argument which it entails have not been allowed to deflect the main objective of identifying key aspects of theory in order to formulate curricular principles.

The danger of over-dependence on Margolis's explication of theory in particular was offset to some extent by seeking to place the issues discussed by him in the context of wider philosophical theorizing. Moreover, questions were constantly raised from the standpoint of an art educator concerning the potential value of such issues for curriculum development and research. The cross-referential, multi-faceted approach which characterized the study as a whole was well suited to an emergent mode of research, but what of the possible advantages of adopting, as an alternative, a preordinate, empirically-based strategy? At the start of the research, it was unclear which aspects of theory were appropriate to an enquiry into the curricular implications of aesthetic controversy. As a consequence of the

research, however, clearly defined principles have emerged which could form the basis for descriptive and experimental studies of groups of learners at different stages of development regarding their capacities to deal with or be instructed in metacriticism. As a further example, studies could be conducted to ascertain the opinions of teacher trainers about who could provide such instruction and how the inclusion of this new dimension in the art curriculum might be achieved.

In connection with 'methodology,' the research could be described as an attempt to explore relationships between theory and method by means of rational and systematic enquiry. This was seen, though, not as a question of applying an existing set of 'rules' to the analysis of 'data' (in this case, theoretical materials drawn from separate disciplines), but as a process of interpretive theorizing arising from a comparative critical reading and re-reading of texts. Underlying the choice of a research method for this study was the assumption that textual material constituted the primary source of data. Inevitably, this raised the question of whether a framework of ideas for curriculum can be considered viable that has not been tested in the crucible of practice. The aim of the research, however, was not to produce a fully viable curriculum, but to discover principles on which both the teaching of metacriticism and future research into this topic should be based. It has, in the process, raised the potential of the term metacriticism being applied more fully in the arena of British art education theorizing. Subsequently, it also offers the potential

for other art education researchers to explore methodological implications in the light of practice.

The main drawback of using theoretical source materials as primary data was that in seeking to gain a broad understanding of controversy in aesthetics, it was necessary to 'trade-off' depth of analysis in regard to each kind of theory investigated. The analyses reported in Chapters 4-7 inclusive could form the basis for further, more detailed studies using 'methodology' as a model. These would need to include, though, a range of interpretive strategies in addition to that of analyzing textual data: for example, interviews with teachers of criticism concerning their views on the relation of concepts and methods, perhaps coupled with a first-hand evaluation of educational settings. The multi-levelled (i.e., hermeneutic) character of 'methodology' as a research model became apparent when, following the analysis of literature education reported in Chapter 6, outcomes were discussed with two English specialists, particularly the point that in an area of the curriculum steeped in traditions of criticism there appeared to be no widely recognized approach to teaching about underlying aesthetics. These discussions gave some hints of a potential for curriculum development in metacriticism that was not apparent solely on the evidence of English education texts. The research implication here is that the curricular potential of aesthetics in respect of English and art cannot be fully explored on the basis of theoretical analysis alone; rather, this should be combined with a process of 'testing' and refining ideas in teaching/learning contexts in the light of perspectives supplied by

specialists in both subjects. Similarly, to extend and apply to curriculum the analyses of philosophical texts, such as those reported in Chapters 4 and 5, it may be desirable to engage in dialogue with philosophers themselves (a situation which does occur in the U.S.A.). The present study has indicated the high potential and value of bringing philosophers with an interest in aesthetics into collaboration with aesthetically-minded art educators over the problems of teaching metacriticism to particular groups of learners. An additional advantage of such collaboration would seem to be that it would offer the potential for enhancing the intellectual status of art in the education system at all levels; concomitantly, it would widen the appeal of philosophy by showing the relevance of philosophical questions to the judgments made about art by specialists and non-specialists alike.

The foregoing observations on the pros and cons of 'dialectical procedure' and 'methodology' indicate that a close parallel can be drawn between the skills and attitudes characteristic of metacriticism and those that are characteristic of research. It would be hoped that individuals who engage in metacriticism, like those who engage in research, are thereby developing attitudes towards enquiry that transcend particular topics and may thus be applied to subsequent intellectual activity.

In summary, the metacritic-as-researcher model of enquiry adopted in the present study has revealed metacriticism to be not only appropriate but fundamental to considerations of research method.

Comparing and contrasting theoretical orientations, detecting commonalities between different kinds of theory, exploring the links between critical concepts and methods, examining the ideological commitments of teachers in relation to content, formulating curricular principles and speculating about applications to practice: these and other strategies pursued in this study are indicative of the potential that metacriticism offers for the field of art education and, indeed, the education system as a whole.

### 9.3 Metacriticism: Key Conclusions

The chief contribution of this study is that it makes explicit with reference to philosophy what is only implicit in much of the art education literature on teaching critical methods, especially in the U.K. A major outcome of the study has been to make a case for teaching metacriticism by demonstrating the need for art educators to explore in detail the conceptual links between the nature of art and concomitant methods of art criticism. For whilst the value of having a knowledge of contexts in criticism is widely recognized within the field of art education, there appears to be little awareness of what this knowledge entails. In this connection, the study has identified key aspects of aesthetic theory that, in combination, reflect not only the diversity, but also the contestability of criticism, namely, the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic evidence, descriptive and interpretive statements, moral and aesthetic judgments, and between intentionalism and anti-intentionalism. These aspects of theory are interdependent and there is considerable overlap between them as the discussion of curricular implications in Chapter 8 revealed.

The emphasis of the research on relating different critical approaches to underlying philosophical stances has been brought into focus through exploring the notion of controversy in philosophy, aesthetics and general education theory. It is proposed that developing curricula with reference to controversy in these different fields of theory would offset the largely reductionist and prescriptive approach to teaching criticism presented in art education texts (for example, some texts that have emanated from the debate over Discipline Based Art Education in the U.S.A.). An emphasis on controversy would effectively problematize the content of such teaching by stressing the interdependence of aesthetics and criticism with reference to first-order learning experiences with artworks. Moreover, it would help to compensate for a lack of theoretical sophistication which, to date, has characterized the literature on teaching art criticism in the U.K. (e.g., Taylor, 1986). In particular, it might serve to dispel the vagueness and lack of direction that typifies current proposals for critical and appreciative aspects of art learning in the National Curriculum documents. 'Knowledge, skills and understanding' are essential to '... the study of ... aesthetic theories' (DES, 1991a, 4.6; 1991b, 4.9); but it is essential also that the nature of 'critical skills and judgments about the aesthetic dimension' (DES, 1991a, 3.41) are clarified in a way that gives full weight to the work of relevant fields of scholarship by providing a coherent framework for linking philosophical stances with strategies for teaching art criticism.

A major conclusion of this study is that engagement in metacriticism should enhance critical sensibilities. For whilst the present research has been predominantly theoretical, this emphasis presupposes that inadequacies of art teaching can be corrected, at least in part, by teachers becoming better informed about underlying theory with a view to this extending, not only their theoretical outlook, but also, by implication, the range of practical opportunities open to them. It is inevitable in a study of metacriticism in education that theory will predominate (metacriticism, by definition, involves a consideration of both the efficacy and cogency of rival theories of criticism). Improving one's grasp of theory, however, will not of itself ensure an improvement in practice. The situation is more complex, involving a combination of factors in which the interrelations of theory and practice are brought fully into play. This is to make a claim for teaching aesthetics and art criticism together as an interactive whole. But it is more than this. In an art education system dominated by the 'productive domain' of art learning, there is a need to develop curricula at different levels of art education in which learners' attempts to apply metacritical principles are directed towards their own artistic productions and those of their peers. An important advantage of metacriticism, then, is that whilst it can be used to assist learners generally to develop well-reasoned positions regarding the appraisal of works by professional artists, it can also help them to become more critically aware of the underlying assumptions of their own practice, whether as critics or artists, making it more likely that their performance in each of these capacities can be improved.



The suggestion that art teachers ought to avail themselves of metacritical content and methods needs, though, to be set against the reality of current practice. Few art teachers are well informed about the analytical/critical domain of art learning (cf. Chap 3.1 & 3.3); even fewer can be said to possess a detailed knowledge of aesthetics. Indeed, for many individuals, their first experience of the systematics of art criticism (let alone metacriticism) usually occurs, if at all, when they undertake studies in higher education. It is possible, therefore, that the expertise needed to develop strategies for teaching about aesthetics in relation to criticism is concentrated mainly in institutions offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses leading to art teaching qualifications, although the nature and extent of such expertise is difficult to determine because of a lack of detailed information on the staffing and other resources available nationally. Experience would seem to indicate that the task of equipping teachers at different levels of art education with the appropriate skills is likely to be primarily a 'top-down' responsibility with the impetus coming from the tertiary level and gradually permeating the whole system. This would seem to affirm that aesthetics should be included as a component of coursework in all relevant art education institutions as a matter of policy and that, accordingly, course leaders and administrators might properly reassess the balance of course content and make provision, where appropriate, for including metacriticism as a taught component. Close cooperation between departments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels would greatly facilitate such developments and would constitute a different emphasis to that currently given in the vast majority of

undergraduate art courses, for which the dominant source of art theory is the history of art. The same can also be said for those courses in GCE Advanced Level art which lead wholly or in part to a written examination (Chap. 3.2). The introduction of metacritical content whether at tertiary or secondary level, though, would be not only a question of individuals sharing their expertise; for many, it would be a question of developing expertise where none at present exists. Hence, a teacher seeking to teach metacriticism would need to be well informed about aesthetics: but, as this present study has indicated, such knowledge cannot be mastered without a sustained intellectual effort. In this connection, the provision of college-based and school-based in-service training would be needed both to convince individuals of the value of metacriticism and to equip them with strategies for pedagogical implementation.

#### 9.4 Possibilities for Future Research

The study as a whole has opened up a number of issues and perspectives which could form a basis for future research. A need exists to expand the curricular implications presented in Chapter 8 by developing and testing a programme of metacritical enquiry in which teaching and learning strategies are incorporated within a structured sequence of content. Part of that programme could involve studying the effects of teaching metacriticism with reference both to canonical works (as in the present research) and to the art products of learners at specific educational levels. This might include, for example, an attempt to assess the value of such teaching as a means of enhancing artistic creativity. Another needed direction would be to explore in depth the

common ground between art and literature education, particularly with reference to intention. For, whilst literature education has proved largely unhelpful as far as developing a pedagogy of metacriticism is concerned, this field nevertheless represents a wealth of knowledge and experience on teaching criticism in the context of wider theoretical concerns.

Beyond the sphere of art education, aspects of the teaching of metacriticism could offer the potential for research into the development of cross-curricular skills and attitudes. The links drawn in the research between art and disciplines such as literature and social studies education indicate that metacriticism ought not to be treated as a peripheral activity suitable only for the study of art at GCE Advanced Level and above, but rather should be made a part of disciplined study across the curriculum not only at those levels but also in both primary and secondary education. The potential value of adopting metacritical approaches within education suggests that the possibilities for research are considerable. For example, comparing and contrasting what it might mean to 'be metacritical' in subjects as diverse as art, science, and humanities could help to illuminate common epistemological problems as well as clarifying distinctive subject-specific controversies.

Furthermore, there is scope for conducting research into the validity and effectiveness of teaching metacriticism from within a multicultural perspective. This would constitute a new area of curriculum research, particularly in the U.K. where multiculturalism

is not usually conceived in terms of raising questions about meaning and objectivity. This might prove to be a highly contentious area of research as it might involve, for example, exploring the implications of attempting to respond critically to artworks from different cultures whilst speculating on the respective merits of the belief systems represented. Such a perspective would give a different emphasis to current multicultural approaches which tend to assume the equal validity of different forms of belief when these are interpreted within their own terms of reference.

These suggestions about possible avenues of future research are made largely on the basis of theoretical analysis; they are, however, firmly oriented towards trial and implementation in actual learning situations. It is essential that attempts to build on the outcomes of this study should tackle seriously the problem of communicating to other teachers (cf. Chap. 1.2), as this cannot be conducted on the strength of theoretical analysis alone. Few practitioners read academic theses. Hence, the need to address teachers at a more pragmatic level begins rather than ends with the present research involving, as it does, a continuing commitment to test ideas in the classroom and to report outcomes by means of lectures, seminars, articles and other forms of dissemination (see, for example, Rawding and Wall, 1991). The process of reporting the positive outcomes of this research is essential to its success as a contribution to the field of art education.

## 9.5 Summary

The purpose of this final chapter has been to assess the possible benefits of the research through taking a detached look at the study as a whole. This involved a critical reflection on the problems encountered in devising and implementing a research 'method' and resulted in some speculations being made about strategies which could be adopted in future studies. Observations were made about the research outcomes and these led to a discussion of those aspects of theory and practice that offer the potential for further, more detailed enquiry. In a discussion of key conclusions, the value and high potential of metacriticism as a curriculum focus was stressed. It was shown to be relevant to both art education and the knowledge bases of disciplines other than aesthetics that have attracted philosophical interest and debate. In this connection, it was argued that metacriticism would contribute not just a valuable new perspective to the area of 'critical studies,' but also would offer the potential for exploring foundational epistemological issues in the curriculum as a whole. The formulation of metacritical principles in Chapter 8 and the ensuing discussion of implications for curriculum development and research could be viewed as a unique contribution to current art education theorizing about the function and status of art within the curriculum. Additionally, it could be seen to provide a needed impetus to the future development of the subject at national and institutional levels.

## NOTES

### Chapter 1

1. The distinction between 'restricted-' and 'extended professionalism' originated with Hoyle (Stenhouse, 1975, pp.143-144). The former term denotes a good classroom teacher who is pragmatic rather than theoretical and whose horizon of professional interest is largely parochial. The latter denotes an individual who, though committed to sound classroom practice, is also concerned with developing curricula within a global perspective by keeping abreast of, and even contributing to, educational theorizing in their chosen field of study. The distinction cannot be pressed too closely in respect of individual cases; moreover, the term 'restricted professionalism' is a descriptive term and thus does not imply an inferior class of teachers (cf. Open Univ., 1972, pp.24-25).

### Chapter 2

1. The eclecticism inherent in this strategy constitutes a novel research perspective, at least in the field of art education. The strategy could also be applied to researching theoretical issues in other areas of the curriculum, for example, with regard to teaching literary criticism or the investigation of topics such as abortion, embryo research, euthanasia, pollution, etc. in humanities and social studies education. In both these areas it is likely that teachers and learners will explore the implications of different attitudes and approaches to the text or topic at hand and will speculate to some degree about the cogency of underlying theories. Such theories also underlie different attitudes and approaches to research. Hence, investigating theory in any discipline involves reflection on the method of investigation itself.
2. The term 'essentially contested concepts' was first coined by the philosopher Gallie (1964) to designate a class of concepts (e.g.,

Christianity, art, democracy) which, historically speaking, have been the loci of seemingly unending disputes over how they are to be applied. Rival groups of disputants adopt distinct, though not exclusive, sets of criteria for applying such concepts. Controversy prevails because (i) no general principle exists with which to adjudicate competing claims, and (ii) circumstances may yet occur that would force any such concept to be revised. According to Gallie (p.181; cf. p.161), different versions of an essentially contested concept have 'features' in common. What distinguishes them concerns the relative importance attached to one feature over another. For example, the concept of art encompasses the artwork, the artist, the audience, the tradition in which the artist stands, and the social values either implicitly or explicitly communicated between artist and public. Gallie outlined several major theories of art, each of which gives priority to one or other of these features (pp. 170-178).

3. The impact of 'interpretive' enquiry on educational research generally has been less noticeable in Britain than in the U.S.A. However, some indication of its emergence in the 1980s in Britain can be gained by comparing the first and second editions of Cohen and Manion's (1980, 1985) standard text on educational research methods. In the second edition, the introductory chapter is described as an '... expansion and major rewrite' of the original version necessitated by an increasing incidence of research studies representing various alternatives to 'positivistic social science', (pp.6-10; cf. pp.27-31). Indeed, the importance of such alternatives is reflected by these authors' recognition of '... two conceptions of social reality' (ibid., emphasis added), namely, 'normative' and 'interpretive' paradigms of educational research (see esp. pp.38-39). The impact of interpretive enquiry on art education research in Britain for the same period was, according to Allison (1986), rather less marked. Noting that only 32 out of 695 studies in his Index of British Studies in Art and Design Education could be categorized as 'interpretive', he commented that, '... Interpretive or naturalistic research is relatively new in educational research, which accounts for its low incidence.'

(p.12). There is, however, every reason to believe that the full impact of interpretive enquiry on art educational research in the U.S.A. will gradually come to be reflected in the British context.

### Chapter 3

1. This point also applies to other curriculum areas, particularly those which fall under the rubric of 'the arts.' An outcome of the enquiry into literature education (see Chap. 6) was that considerable scope exists for English specialists to explore the pedagogical implications of divergent approaches to literary criticism. Curriculum research is needed to apply the scholarly insights of recent aesthetics of literature to the teaching of English in schools. Probably the same could be said for other arts subjects such as music and dance, not to mention the sciences and the humanitites. Metacriticism is, therefore, not solely a philosophical approach to the criticism of art, but it has implications for the interpretive aspects of many forms of knowledge and enquiry across the curriculum.
2. In the context of this enquiry the word 'art' as it occurs in conjunction with 'criticism' and 'history' should be understood by the reader as synonymous with 'art and design'. The points raised may thus be considered applicable to a wide range of visual forms which includes not only works of so-called fine art but also designed artefacts arising from both European and non-European cultural traditions.
3. CEMREL is an acronym for the Central Midwestern Regional Educational Laboratory. In the institution's literature it is described as '... a private, non-profit corporation supported in part as a regional educational laboratory by funds from the US office of Education's Department of Health, Education and Welfare.'
4. A major objection to the inclusion of art criticism in the art class is advanced by those practitioners who, according to Eisner (1972a, pp.9-10), maintain that 'excessive verbalisation kills art'. The point of this objection is two-fold: first, that



discursive speech is alien to visual media such as painting and sculpture and cannot therefore communicate the unique aesthetic qualities of such works; and second, that to analyse works of art is to dissect them and thereby eviscerate them of meaning. The first part of this objection is easily countered. The critic's performance is not intended to provide a substitute for the spectator's direct experience of works of art; rather it acts as a guide-post or pointer to artistic qualities and significances which might otherwise remain hidden to the less discerning (Hospers, 1975, p.40). A further consideration is that spectators themselves show a marked desire to share their aesthetic experiences of art works with others, to justify their critical opinions of such works, and to consider competing appraisals. Redfern (1976, p.63) observed that the claims of some for 'aesthetic appreciation being a purely personal matter' were belied by this almost universal tendency of spectators to talk about art (cf. Feldman. 1972. p.451). Many artists also verbalise about their art in the form of letters, pamphlets, manifestos, interviews, etc., as revealed for instance by Chipp's (1968) celebrated anthology of writings on modern art. Whilst this does not mean that the artist's explanation of his or her work is necessary for interpretation, it at least indicates that discursive language is an important aid to artistic understanding.

The second part of the objection, that critical activity is both primarily and inappropriately analytical, is partly justifiable. As Andrews (1980, p.177) pointed out, 'the label "critical analysis" tends to have scientific and quantitative connotations': thus conceived the term is clearly incompatible with the complex and often idiosyncratic ways in which art is produced.

#### Chapter 4

1. The term 'standard oppositions' is Bernstein's (1983, p.1 *passim*). It is used by him to designate contrasting epistemological positions: 'objectivism versus relativism, rationality versus irrationality, objectivity versus subjectivity, realism versus anti-realism.'

## Chapter 5

1. Hermeneutics has been defined as '... the science or art of making interpretations' (Kaelin, 1989, p.208). Theorists in this largely Continental strain of philosophy seek not merely to define the explicit procedures of critical interpretation, but to articulate the links between artwork, interpreter, and the artistic and critical traditions to which these belong. It is axiomatic in hermeneutic theory that no critic can ever hope fully to relinquish his or her personal history, incorporating, as it inevitably does, all of the background beliefs, attitudes, and predilections that together constitute each person's individuality. Indeed there is no good reason why these personal biases should be discounted. On the contrary, the dynamic nature of criticism is forged when (to employ a standard phrase of hermeneutic theory) the critic's 'horizon' is 'fused' with that of the artwork. What matters, however, is that the critic's horizon should not be allowed to dominate or impose upon the work: it is to be a relationship of mutual give and take, not an enslavement, or violation of the work's integrity. In particular, theorists in the hermeneutic tradition call into question the 'subject/object schema' characteristic of linguistic analysis in which the artwork is treated as subservient to the percipient. Positively, emphasis is placed on the speaking power of the artwork; on its capacity to engender experiences of emancipation and self-disclosure. A good introduction to hermeneutics and its key figures is Palmer (1969).

## Chapter 6

1. Beardsley employed the terms 'instructional' and 'educational' more or less interchangeably: for example, '... the "theory of instruction" (which I take to be a substantial part of what is often called "educational theory") ...' (p.5). According to Rowntree's (1981) Dictionary of Education, 'instruction' is '... often used (especially in the U.S.) as a synonym for TEACHING or even for EDUCATION, but generally used in the U.K. to refer to TRAINING that enables the learner to carry out some fairly routine skill'. If Rowntree's assessment is correct, then it needs to be made clear to the anticipated British audience for this research

that 'instructional theory' in the present chapter is meant to convey the broader definition implied by Beardsley's statement. The term 'pedagogical' is employed in this chapter as synonymous with 'instructional' broadly conceived. Funk & Wagnall's Standard College Dictionary defines 'pedagogical' as, 'The theory of how to teach'. However, as far as this research is concerned, it is deemed essential that 'how' to teach be articulated in terms of a theoretical linkage with the 'what' and 'why' of teaching as well.

2. According to Lyas (1983), anti-intentionalists divide the 'real' properties of artworks into two classes:

- 1) primary or surface features (such as redness), and
- 2) qualities which are emergent from the primary features (such as balance, unity, elegance).

They distinctly deny that properties which require contextual knowledge for their detection are real properties, namely, those which cannot be directly discerned in the work and have instead to be attributed by inference (such as 'sincerity', which is, of course, a veiled reference to an artist's intentions). Intentionalists would reply to this that not even the primary or surface features are inference free. Whilst they may be more easily discerned, this does not make them different in kind, only in degree.

3. A similar point can also be maintained for the subject of irony, for, as Nathan (op. cit., p.254) suggested, 'It is perhaps in this area ... that the inclination towards intentionalism is strongest' (cf. Rawding, 1984, pp.6-11). The main characteristic of irony is that it presents an overt, surface meaning which is subverted, in the act of interpretation, by a covert meaning. The two levels of meaning are, typically, opposites. Subtler forms of irony, in particular, represent an attempt to deceive at least some members of a target audience (Kaufer, 1977, pp.94-98) and thus, for reasons similar to those outlined above in respect of forgeries, these works require an approach to interpretation that is specifically and intrinsically concerned with the issue of intention. Nevertheless, this does not entail that critics who interpret irony

need to be committed to a search for biographical evidence of intention. Nathan (op. cit.) for one, in similar manner to that of Wimsatt and Beardsley, distinctly repudiated an 'intentionalist' approach, insisting instead that direct information of this kind is neither necessary nor often helpful for achieving a correct reading of ironic works.

Whether or not a critic employs direct independent evidence of intention, the subject of irony interpretation (which Margolis did not discuss) aptly illustrates Margolis's wide-ranging comment that:

It is quite impossible to ascribe representational properties to an artwork without implicating the artist's intentions. (p.188).

4. As in the work of Marcuse (1968; see, for example, 'The Affirmative Character of Culture', pp.88-133). Commenting on Marcuse's position, Wolff (1983) stated that he began in this essay '... by criticizing the "affirmative" concept of culture, which by one means or another simply confirms and supports the existing unequal order; against this he counter-poses a "negating" culture which can take issue with society.' (p.42).

## Chapter 7

1. The term 'technocratic rationality' has been widely used by (critical) theorists in the field of teacher education, particularly in the U.S.A., to denote the emphasis given in a majority of teacher training institutions to developing efficient and conformist teachers rather than questioning ones. In particular, it is claimed, management skills in the classroom are given greater prominence than the ability of teachers to penetrate the moral and ethical implications of educational knowledge. This characterization of teacher education seems less convincing when applied to the British context, although without pressing the point too vigorously, the recent introduction of the National Curriculum, particularly the stress placed on developing scientific and technological capability, invites a close scrutiny of the

perspectives afforded by critical theory. A key British theorist is Gibson (1986).

2. The anthology in which Esland's article was first published (Young, 1971) is widely recognized as a seminal work in the sociology of knowledge (e.g., Bernbaum, 1977; Karabel & Halsey, 1977; Sharp 1970; Blackledge & Hunt, 1985; Beyer & Zeichner, 1987). According to Bernbaum, 'Esland's influential article ... is representative of the strong relativist position within the new sociology of education' (p.13, emphasis added): a trend in academic thinking which emerged in the late 1960s in Britain and was centrally concerned with '... the necessity of rendering problematic what counts as educational knowledge' (Sharp, op. cit., p.77). The radical relativism inherent in Esland's position has been challenged (Blackledge & Hunt, op. cit., p.294f.) using arguments similar to those employed in the context of philosophical aesthetics by Margolis (see Chap. 3.3.2). For example, to claim as Esland and others have done, that knowledge is socially constructed in the radical sense that it serves the interests of dominant groups in society, is to fail to appreciate that in respect of '... knowledge, ideas and beliefs ... questions of origin and function are quite unrelated to questions of truth and validity' (ibid., p.297). Nevertheless, in spite of the oversimplifications of Esland's position, his critique of the underlying assumptions of the objectivist conception of educational knowledge is especially pertinent to the present research, given the emphasis of the research on exploring the curricular implications of contestability in aesthetics.

## Chapter 8

1. In this connection, Finch's (1986) notion of the 'enlightenment' role of research seems, at this culminating point of the thesis, to be particularly apt. Finch's work was discovered as a consequence of examining a range of educational texts bearing on the nature and methods of research (Chap. 7, below). Aside from her account of different role models of research, her format for presenting 'findings' was recognized as pertinent to the present research. The emphasis of the final chapter of her book on synthesizing insights

gained from enquiring into different aspects of her topic is germane to the writing of the present research 'report' for reasons already given (e.g., Chap. 1.2). In particular, her practice of condensing key issues in the form of underlined sentences and then following these with brief expositions has been adopted as a model for the current presentation of curricular implications.

2. 'Alien' here can equally well be applied to certain sub-groups of the Western fine art tradition which, in recent years, have brought questions of artistic status and aesthetic value dramatically to the fore: e.g., the minimal sculpture of Carl Andre and the so-called 'objectionable' art photography of Robert Mapplethorpe.

3. The caption in 'Picture Post' (16/9/1950) reads as follows:

All is not brutality in the Korean War. He was just an old gentleman of Korea minding his own business, when the front caught up with him. He wasn't hit, but the horror of the battle was too much for him. He collapsed, and a G.I. took him into the shade of a wall and gave him water, but the old man died.

Hardy's (1985) own account of the incident is more honest, but it conveys a rather less optimistic view of human nature:

After we had got what we needed, we walked some distance back along the hot dusty road, until we came to an old farmhouse with a gateway and a courtyard. There were a lot of American soldiers milling around the courtyard, but none of them seemed to notice an old Korean peasant lying on the ground in the blazing sun.

I decided to have a closer look. He must have collapsed from exhaustion, or heat, or both. There was a smear of blood, still wet, on the wall behind him, where he had hit his head in falling. His eyes flickered, so he was still alive, but his lips were parched. I thought I'd give him a drink of water to see if that did him any good, but then I had a better idea: one which would give me a good picture. I asked an American soldier if he would mind giving the old man some water while I took the photographs. The American smiled: 'Sure', he said, 'Just so long as the water comes out of your bottle and not mine.' As far as I was concerned, it was a small price to pay. I took a few pictures and we carried him into the shade. (p.118).

4. The reality of the assertion can be illustrated with reference to an anecdote from this researcher's own teaching experience. In a pilot study designed to test the capacity of lower secondary school pupils to recognize visual irony in art (Rawding, 1984, p.54f), a group of 12 year old girls was asked to write down individual responses to C.R.W. Nevinson's painting Paths of Glory, which depicts two dead soldiers face down in the mud of No Man's Land next to a fence of sticks festooned with barbed wire. Several pupils interpreted the sticks as trees stripped bare of leaves owing to the onset of winter. One even wrote that the men in the picture were taking a nap. These responses, and others in a similar vein, gave proof that the 'distance' between the girls' cultural milieu and that of the artist made it difficult for them to 'read' the visual information correctly and thus reach a convincing judgment of the work.

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0652

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1984

IRONY IN THE VISUAL ARTS:      AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION OF  
INTERPRETATIVE ABILITIES IN 10-13 YEAR OLD SCHOOL STUDENTS.

M.A.(Art and Design Education), CNA

Duration Of Project: 12 months

Institution: Leicester Polytechnic

Abstract

Characteristics of irony in literature identified. Distinctions drawn between irony and related modes (satire, parody, burlesque, etc.). Concept of irony considered in its application to visual arts, with particular reference to works of Otto Dix on theme of 'War Cripples'. Developmental theory regarding the nature of adolescent response to verbal problems (esp. that of Peel) utilised to develop a model for categorization of written responses to simple ironies in verbal and visual form. Descriptive study employing 97 subjects indicated that the ability to recognise and interpret irony is significantly related to intelligence but not to the normal process of maturation.

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Keywords

HUMANITIES,      IMAGERY,      MEANING,      COGNITION,      DEVELOPMENT,  
DESCRIPTIVE, RESPONSES, TESTS

1.      The counterweight (to 'The Stonebreakers') was the 'Burial at Ornans,' and a bizarre one it was. There are plenty of paintings of ritual, or the Christian sacraments, but none of them is much like this. It is not simply a question of sympathy or the lack of it, for there are many pictures of ritual which we are invited to contemplate with some degree of distaste: the long series of Bacchic dances, the 'Worship of the Golden Calf', or later, in more polemical mood, Hogarth's 'Enthusiasm Delineated'. But the very word "enthusiasm" indicates what is unique about the 'Burial'. At least the Maenads or the Children of Israel were hell-bent on their pursuits; they were clearly animated by belief, even if in false gods; for the artists who portrayed them, it seemed unthinkable to dissociate ritual from some form of religious experience. But this is what Courbet has done in the 'Burial at Ornans'. He has given us, in an almost schematic form, the constituents of a particular ritual, but not their unison. He has painted worship without worshippers; the occasion of religious experience, but instead of its signs, vivid or secretive, a peculiar, frozen fixity of expression. (This applies to individual faces and to the image as a whole.) It is not exactly an image of disbelief, more of collective distraction; not exactly indifference, more inattention; not exactly, except in a few of the women's faces, the marks of grief or the abstraction of mourning, more the careful, ambiguous blankness of a public face. And mixed with it, the grotesque; the bulbous, red faces of the beadles and the creaking gestures of the two old men at the graveside.
2.      In formal terms, the 'Burial' has many sources. It takes its general format from a painting Courbet saw in Holland in 1847, Van der Helst's 'Banquet of Captain Bicker'. But it stiffens and simplifies that format, so that the components of the situation are each displayed with the greatest possible clarity, heads focused in an even light, crucifix silhouetted against the sky, the main figures arranged in distinct, almost rhetorical poses. The way in which this is done owes a lot to the popular print. Not, I think, to any print in particular, though there are echoes of several: the famous 'Degre des ages' with its procession from childhood to senility, the various 'Souvenirs mortuaires', the 'Mort et convoi de Marlborough', even the 'Convoi funebre de Napoleon'. But these are echoes more than borrowings, and Courbet owes most to the artisan engraver's general approach to his subject: his clear, cut-out forms, his clumsy, dramatic gestures, the way each part of his image is organized to convey the 'units' of a ritual or a social situation. The popular print exists to give information, to leave its public in no possible doubt about what happened, who was there, who was most important, who lost, who won. Its form derives from its function, and Courbet copied both.

3. At the same time he looked again at the "official" tradition. In the 'Burial' he is less reliant on Rembrandt than before, and closer to Spanish painting: look at the pose and drapery of the beadle who stares out of the picture, and the way the head, shoulders and sleeves of the kneeling gravedigger are juxtaposed with the red and black behind them. (This is typical of Courbet: the pose of the gravedigger is taken straight from Van der Helst, but the way he is placed against the beadle owes nothing to the Dutch and a lot to Velazquez or Zurbaran.)
4. In other words, the 'Burial at Ornans' is built from very disparate materials; and, in detail, the materials are fairly distinct. But structure is what counts, not detail; and looked at whole the 'Burial' is anything but a hybrid. The most obvious thing about it is its simplicity; though even this is not straightforward. Simplicity on this scale, with this intractable material, is something a painter builds rather than finds.
5. Courbet has gathered the townspeople of Ornans in the new graveyard, opposite the cliffs of Roche du Chateau and Roche du Mont. He has painted more than forty-five figures life-size in a great frieze over eight yards long, arranging the figures in a long row which curves back slightly round the grave itself; and in places, following the conventions of popular art, he has piled the figures one on top of the other as if they stood on steeply sloping ground. And towards the right of the picture he has let the mass of mourners congeal into a solid wall of black pigment, against which the face of the mayor's daughter and the handkerchief which covers his sister Zoe's face register as tenuous, almost tragic interruptions. He has used colour deliberately and dramatically, in a way which has little to do with the careful materialism of 'The Stonebreakers', to symbolize matter; almost as our eyes move right, to threaten the faces put upon the solid ground. (Compare the 'Burial' with the preliminary charcoal sketch, and one can see quite easily how this was done. In the sketch, for instance, the second row of mourners appears intermittently 'behind' the first, costumes and faces nearly obscured. In the painting they are moved upward, their faces are revealed, and their mourning dress provides a black frame 'above' the faces in the front row, filling the spaces between the heads and continuing the black surface which begins at ground level. The effect is crucial: look, for example, at the faces and kerchiefs of Courbet's three sisters, in the front row towards the right, and compare the emotional weight of the image in the sketch and the painting.) Black is the basis of the 'Burial at Ornans', and two sequences of colour are played against it, over the picture's whole length. First the flesh colour of the hands and faces; second, the plain white of handkerchiefs and collars, lace caps, spats, the priest's trimmings, the gravedigger's sleeves, and the glossy hide of a dog. At the left of the picture the same colours are put in negative: the black of crucifix, caps, and belts against the surplices of the choristers, black crossbones and black tears on the pall itself. (This last is a deliberate, and typical, reversal of the facts. All the prototypes in popular art and embroidery - for example,

the coffin of Marlborough - show a black pall decorated with gold or white tears and skull. In the sketch the pall was still neutral in colour and without decoration; it was only when it was turned round and made part of the group behind the priest that its form and colour were decided.) Finally, Courbet adds two notes of stronger colour, the beadles' costumes and the blue and grey of the old man's coat and gaiters. He cleared a space above the old man's head and used the grey and blue to punctuate the black surface at its halfway point; and he placed the crucifix and golden censer as a second hiatus at the left.

6. In other words, the 'Burial at Ornans' is carefully and subtly constructed. The repetitive forms of popular art are animated and reorganized; the monotone of black is accented just enough to keep it alive and active against the faces. Look at the sketch once again, which is far closer to the crude straightforwardness of the 'Souvenirs mortuaires', and it is clear what kind of intelligence has been at work: breaking and turning the long line of heads; drawing the black into dense clusters and making the white area a more positive interval in the picture; creating just enough space, between crucifix and censer, or between priest and gravedigger, to make the various groups distinct. Nothing is enlivened too much: the forms of popular art show through the picture like a skeleton: no device is strong enough to obscure the basic theme, the faces etched in even light against the mass of black below them.
7. This is the picture's structure. It is more complex than it seems at first sight, but it can be described step by step, with some kind of certainty. Beyond this point, when we start to ask about the picture's meaning, the real difficulties begin. What, to put it briefly, is the 'Burial's' affective atmosphere? What are the mourners' attitudes and emotions, and what is Courbet's attitude to the event portrayed? Is there some meaning - as Courbet's friend Buchon suggested - to the juxtaposition of the priest and the peasant gravedigger, linked as they are by the beadles' pock-marked faces?
8. We have to answer such questions in the face of an image which deliberately avoids emotional organization: by that I mean the orchestration of forms to mimic and underline the emotional connotations of the subject. In the 'Burial' there is no single focus of attention, no climax towards which the forms and faces turn. Least of all is the picture organized around the sacrament of burial: hardly a single face, save perhaps the gravedigger's, is turned towards the priest, and the line of heads at the right of the picture looks the other way entirely - away from the coffin and the crucifix. (Compare the sketch once again: the faces there are all turned attentively towards the grave.)
9. There is no exchange of gaze or glance, no reciprocity between these figures. Only the inquisitive, upturned face of the serving-boy seems definitely to look at something; the rest are averted, impassive, the eyes seemingly focused on the air. Men share the same expression, but we could not indicate their state

of mind - grief, gravity, even indifference - with any confidence. They share faces, but do they share emotions? Is the 'Burial' a sacrament or merely a social occasion? It is both, clearly, but are the two tragically or comically mixed? Should we trust to our laughter at the beadies' noses, or yield to our empathy with the women's tears? Should we call it, as Champfleury did, a simple record of provincial life, or should we give it the force of allegory, as Buchon did, and call it a new Dance of Death?

10. We are not inventing this perplexity. Critic after critic, when the 'Burial' reached Paris late in 1850, asked the same questions, though with more rancour. It was precisely its lack of open, declared 'significance' which offended most of all; it was the way the 'Burial' seemed to hide its attitudes, seemed to contain within itself too many contraries - religious and secular, comic and tragic, sentimental and grotesque. It was this inclusiveness, this exact and cruel deadpan, that made the 'Burial' the focus of such different meanings. It was an image that took on the colours of its context; and perhaps it was designed to do so.

N.B. Para. Nos. added.

Single quotation marks indicate author's use of italics.  
Underlining indicates direct quotations (Chap. 2.3.2).

APPENDIX III : LIST OF PROPOSITIONS SUMMARIZING MAIN POINTS ARISING FROM ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS IN PHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS.

1. The ontological status of artworks is impossible to account for in strictly perceptual or non-perceptual terms, as is indicated by the problems of identity (discriminating natural, artifactual, and artistic forms) and individuation (fixing art types by reference to their token instances).
2. The logical difficulties attending the concept 'artwork' are only resolvable by relocating aesthetics within a theory of culture. In this regard, the concepts 'cultural emergence' and 'physical embodiment' provide a theoretical basis for identifying and characterizing non-perceptual qualities of artworks by reference to their material properties.
3. The logical difficulties attending the concept 'artwork' are highlighted by the problem in criticism of distinguishing between 'internal' and 'external' evidence (i.e., between properties of the work that call for description and those that call for interpretation). Whilst some critical statements are unequivocal, and are thus easily distinguished as referring to either internal or external properties, the greater proportion of such statements demonstrate that it is impossible clearly to demarcate what is descriptively present in an artwork from what is interpretively imputed to it.
4. It is a characteristic of aesthetic judgements that these are validated on grounds of plausibility rather than on an either-or definition of truth. However, the validation of critical statements depends on their achieving compatibility with what may be descriptively specified of given artworks and on their conforming with particular interpretive schemata arising from the traditions of professional criticism. Critical enquiry should, therefore, be hospitable to the possibility of maintaining equally plausible interpretations, in individual cases, of (at least some) artworks.
5. Critical discourse is not logically uniform in character, nor easily discriminable in terms of aesthetic and non-aesthetic concepts; instead it admits of a wide range of aesthetically relevant terminology that encompasses moral, political, religious, and otherwise ideological perspectives.
6. Direct biographical evidence of an artist's intention can be aesthetically relevant because, in given cases, it informs us about properties which could not be perceived solely through consulting the artwork.